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**FOR & AGAINST  
DOCTORS**





# FOR *and* AGAINST DOCTORS

*An Anthology*  
*compiled by*  
ROBERT HUTCHISON  
*and*  
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## FOREWORD

Doctors have at all times incurred the abuse of the laity, but they have also received almost extravagant praise; censure and praise being alike often ill-deserved. However, as it is always amusing and possibly corrective to see ourselves through the eyes of others, we have thought it might be of interest to bring together samples of the opinions expressed in different ages about doctors and their work.

So far as we are aware no one has done this before. It is true that Witkowski published (in 1884 and 1885) two volumes on *Le mal qu'on a dit des médecins*, but he expressly omitted praise and moreover his quotations were mainly drawn from classical and French literature.

In making our compilation we have chosen, for the most part, the opinions of non-medical writers and have confined ourselves as far as possible to criticisms of medicine and doctors as a whole, excluding encomiums or condemnations of individuals.

Part of the material in this anthology was used by one of us (R. H.) in the MacAlister lecture for 1934 which gave rise to a leading article in *The Times* entitled 'What the Patient thinks.' This, and the ensuing correspondence in that and other journals, showed that there was a fairly wide interest in the subject and has encouraged us to publish our collection in its present form.

Most of it was published originally in the *London Hospital Gazette*, to the Editors and Proprietors of which we are indebted for permission to reproduce it.

We should like to thank those whose interest in the MacAlister lecture led them to write to the Press,

especially Mrs. Murray Draper for the poem on page 153 (*Morning Post*, July 2, 1934) and the Rev. H. J. Bardsley and Mr. R. Fitzgibbon Young for the quotations from Jekyll and Leibnitz respectively (*Times*, July 19 and August 1).

We are also grateful to the Director and Staff of the Brighton Public Library for unfailing courtesy and generosity in lending books; to Mr. Marcus Tod for help with Greek inscriptions on stone; to Miss D. A. Gray for two translations; to Miss J. M. Grant and Dr. Olive Potter for quotations from modern literature; to Dr. Cyril Elgood for Persian and Arabic quotations.

Finally, our thanks are due to the following who have allowed us to use copyright passages from the works stated: Miss Joyce Dennys and Messrs. John Lane, Ltd., 'The Over-Dose'; Mr. Rudyard Kipling for two stanzas of a poem from 'Rewards and Fairies' and for an extract from an address to students at the Middlesex Hospital; Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., Harriet Hamilton King's 'Ballads of the North'; Mr. John Murray, Robert Browning's 'Dramatic Idyls'; the Proprietors of *Punch* for Woon's poem 'Two of a Trade'; Messrs. Martin Secker, Ltd., 'More from a Lawyer's Notebook'; Mr. J. A. Spender, 'The Comments of Bagshot'; Mr. George Bernard Shaw, 'The Doctor's Dilemma'; Mr. L. A. G. Strong, 'Corporal Tune'; and Mr. Humbert Wolfe, 'Cursory Rhymes.'

## OATH

*I swear by Apollo Physician, by Asclepius, by Health, by Panacea and by all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will carry out, according to my ability and judgment, this oath and this indenture. To hold my teacher in this art equal to my own parents; to make him partner in my livelihood; when he is in need of money to share mine with him; to consider his family as my own brothers, and to teach them this art, if they want to learn it, without fee or indenture; to impart precept, oral instruction, and all other instruction to my own sons, the sons of my teacher, and to indentured pupils who have taken the physician's oath, but to nobody else. I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrong-doing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course. Similarly I will not give to a woman a pessary to cause abortion. But I will keep pure and holy both my life and my art. I will not use the knife, not even, verily, on sufferers from stone, but I will give place to such as are craftsmen therein. Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrong-doing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man or woman, bond or free. And whatsoever I shall see or hear in the course of my profession, as well as outside my profession in my intercourse with men, if it be what should not be published abroad, I will never divulge, holding such things to be holy secrets. Now if I carry out this oath, and break it not, may I gain for ever reputation among all men for my life and for my art; but if I transgress it and forswear myself, may the opposite befall me.*

Hippocrates.

Trans. W. H. S. Jones.







## I. PROVERBS

**Physician, heal thyself.**

## MEDICAL PROVERBS

Proverbs are usually anonymous—the wisdom of many, as it has been said, embodied in the wit of one—and belong to no particular age or country. One must not, of course, take proverbial wisdom too seriously, for it is easy to quote proverbs that are mutually contradictory, but none the less a proverb usually embodies one aspect of truth, or what the populace from its experience believes to be the truth, for otherwise it would never have obtained general currency.

Now the healing art and its practitioners come home so much to the business and bosoms of men that there are naturally many medical proverbs. They are nearly all, alas, unfavourable to doctors and bring against them accusations that recur as we shall see throughout the ages.

### *A Doctor's Qualifications and Character*

A surgeon should be young, a physician old.  
*French and Italian (Venetian).*

A doctor's character should be square, his knowledge round, his gall bladder large and his heart small.  
*Chinese.*

[A large gall bladder signifies bravery, a small heart indicates carefulness.]

No man is a good physician who has never been sick.

*Arabic.*

He who has killed a thousand persons is half a doctor.

*Tamil.*

A loquacious doctor is successful.

*Tamil.*

The best surgeon is one that hath been hacked himself.

*Proverb (quoted by Christie).*

Each physician thinks his pills the best.

*German.*

Hussars pray for war, doctors for fever.

*German.*

Tender surgeons make foul wounds.

*Italian.*

No good doctor ever takes physic.

*Italian.*

Doctors make the very worst patients.

*Lean's Collectanea.*

Where there are three doctors there are two  
atheists.

*Mediæval.*

If you have a friend who is a physician send him  
to the house of your enemy.

*Portuguese.*

A lucky physician is better than a learned one.

*German.*

### *The Patient's Point of View*

The sick chamber of the patient is the kingdom  
of the physician.

*Eastern.*

A physician is an angel when employed but a devil  
when one must pay him.

*German.*

What the doctor says is all right, but what he  
sells is false.

*Chinese.*

( 16 )

One doctor makes work for another.

*Lean's Collectanea.*

The doctor is often more to be feared than the disease.

*Latin and French.*

### *Consultations*

In a dangerous illness call in three doctors.

*Chinese Proverb.*

No physician is better than three.

*German.*

One physician is better than two, but three are fatal.

*Punch.*

### *Professional Status*

Medicine is one of the nine low trades.

*Chinese.*

### *Doctors and the State*

Do not dwell in a city whose governor is a physician.

*Hebrew.*

( 17 )

A multiplicity of jurors and a multiplicity of physicians are proofs alike of a bad State.

*Italian.*

*Doctors Reap Unmerited Reward*

God heals, and the physician hath the thanks.

*Old Proverb*

*used by Ambroise Paré (1510-90).*

If the doctor cures, the eye sees it; if he kills, the earth hides it.

*Scottish and Portuguese.*

*Also attributed to Nicocles (4th Cent. B.C.).*

Happy is the physician who is called in at the end of the illness.

*Quoted as 'a common proverb' by Rabelais (1483-1553).  
Pantagruel, Bk. III.*

*Their Treatment is often Fatal*

A young physician makes a lumpy churchyard.

*Gascon.*

A new doctor—a new gravedigger.

*German.*



Who has a physician has an executioner.

*German.*

When you call the physician call the judge to make  
your Will.

*German.*

While doctors consult, the patient dies.

*Venetian.*

A doctor's child dies not from disease but from  
medicine.

*Tamil.*

Medicine does not kill ; the physician kills.

*Chinese.*

*They are Sought in Emergencies*

A half doctor near is better than a whole one  
far away.

*German.*



## II. THE ANCIENTS

Honour a physician with the honour due unto him for the uses which ye may have of him : for the Lord hath created him.

For of the most High cometh healing, and he shall receive honour of the king.

The skill of the physician shall lift up his head : and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. . . .

Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him : let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him.

There is a time when in their hands there is good success.

For they shall also pray unto the Lord, that he would prosper that which they give for ease and remedy to prolong life.

He that sinneth before his Maker, let him fall into the hand of the physician.

*Ecclesiasticus.*

## THE ANCIENTS

We have included among 'the Ancients,' writers, Eastern or Western, who commented on the medical profession before the fall of the Roman Empire (476 A.D.). The majority are Greek and Roman, but the Old and New Testaments have contributed both praise and blame.

The Greeks were inclined to laugh at their doctors, in spite of the great Hippocrates—from the disparaging fables of Æsop written in the 6th century B.C. to the epigrams of Nicarchus under the Roman Empire, who said that even the stone image of Zeus could not survive a visit from a doctor. Plato, on the other hand, took a reasonable view of the profession, and there were epigrammatists who, in praise of certain physicians, said that they robbed Death of his prey.

The Romans were more bitter than the Greeks; the wit of Martial, Juvenal and Plautus has sting, and the elder Pliny condemned all doctors as scoundrels, partly perhaps because in his day medicine in Rome was in the hands of Greeks. We have not found much praise from the Romans; even Galen was most uncomplimentary to his colleagues, but Virgil was gentle as always and Seneca gives a delightful picture of a generous physician.

## WISDOM FROM THE EAST

### *Hebrew Opinion*

The best of doctors is ripe for Hell.

*The Talmud.*

The best physicians are deserving of punishment ; in the pursuit of knowledge they experiment on their patient and often with fatal results.

*Rabbi Judah* (123-190 A.D.).

### *Biblical Failures*

And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great : yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.

And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

*2nd Chronicles* xvi. 12, 13.

And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better but rather grew worse.

*St. Mark* vi. 26.

### *Indian Ideals*

Those who sell the treatment of disease as merchandise gather the dust and neglect the gold.

*Charaka.*

*Epic Period of Hindu Medicine* (2500-600 B.C.).

In illness the physician is a father ; in convalescence, a friend ; when health is restored, he is a guardian.

*Brahmanic saying.*

Honour a physician before thou hast need of him.

*Brahmanic saying ascribed to Ben Syra.*

### *Chinese Doctors*

Doctors cannot cure their own complaints.

*Huai Nan-tzu.*

*Chow Dynasty (1121-249 B.C.).*

The good doctor pays constant attention to keeping people well so that there will be no sickness.

*Huai Nan-tzu.*

*Chow Dynasty (1121-249 B.C.).*

The skilful doctor treats those who are well but the inferior doctor treats those who are ill.

*Ch'in Yueh-jen (c. 225 B.C.).*

*Difficult Classics.*

Men worry over the great number of diseases while doctors worry over the scarcity of effective remedies.

*Ch'in Yueh-jen (c. 225 B.C.).*

The skilful doctor knows by observation, the mediocre doctor by interrogation, the ordinary doctor by palpation.

*Chang Chung-ching (fl. 170-196 A.D.).*

## GREECE

*A Fable*

A Famous *Doctor of Physick* had a Terrible *Dream* one Night of a *Quartan Ague*. The Vision was so Haggish, and Ghastly, that it frightened him at first ; but upon a little better Acquaintance, the *Physician* took Heart, and accosted the *Apparition* after This Manner :

*Madam* ; says he, *I think it would be much for your Good, and for the Credit of us Both, if you and I could come to a Better Understanding one of another. You have a Faculty, 'tis true, of making People look like Walking Ghosts ; but then when you have drawn a Body down to a Skeleton, you commonly stop there, and leave it to the Physicians to finish the Work, and make a Carcass of it ; insomuch that Thousands of your Patients come off at last, for One of Ours. And then it looks ill-favour'dly, methinks, that when you have once taken Possession of a Body, 'tis a good Two-years-Work to get you out again ; to the Scandal of your Obstinacy, or of our Ignorance ; not but that we can allow you to Mortify People for a While, provided you would but be gone again when we speak the Word.*

*Mr. Doctor*, says the *Apparition*, 'tis your interest to Prolong Diseases, not to Shorten them, for *whether the Patient Lives or Dies your Visits are all Paid For.*

*A Moral*

. . . There were *Two Doctors* upon a Consultation about a Sick Man, one said he would *Live*, t'other that he would *Dye*, and in *This Interim*, the *Patient*

marches off, and leaves both his Physicians in the Right. *I knew what it would come to*, says the one, and *I could have prevented it*, says the other. As if *Life* and *Death* were no more than a Chance at *Cross* or *Pile*; and *Physick* only a dealing by *Guess*.

? *Æsop* (c. 570 B.C.).

*Trans. Roger L'Estrange* (1616-1704).  
(*The Fables of Æsop, etc., Part II.*)

### *The Master Speaks*

The medical man sees terrible sights, touches unpleasant things, and the misfortunes of others bring a harvest of sorrows that are peculiarly his; but the sick by means of the art rid themselves of the worst of evils, disease, suffering, pain and death.

*Hippocrates.*  
*Breaths.*

### *The Hippocratic Physician*

The dignity of a physician requires that he should look healthy, and as plump as nature intended him to be. . . . Then he must be clean in person, well dressed, and anointed with sweet-smelling unguents that are not in any way suspicious. . . .

The prudent man must also be careful of certain moral considerations—not only to be silent, but also of a great regularity of life, since thereby his reputation will be greatly enhanced; he must be a gentleman in character, and being this he must be grave and kind to all.

*The Physician.*



The physician must have at his command a certain ready wit, as dourness is repulsive both to the healthy and to the sick.

For a physician who is a lover of wisdom is the equal of a god.

*Hippocrates* (c. 460-357 B.C.).  
*Decorum.*  
*Trans. W. H. S. Jones.*

### *Praise and Blame from Poets*

For a leech is worth many other men.

*Homer* (c. 850-800 B.C.).  
*Iliad*, XI, 514.  
*Trans. Lang-Leaf.*

A wise physician, skill'd our wounds to heal,  
Is more than armies to the public weal.

*Iliad*, XI, 636. *Trans. Pope.*

There are doctors who to show their worth and to be sure of an excuse made bad seem worse and of the worse make a disaster.

*Mimnermos* (fl. c. 634-600 B.C.).  
*Quoted by Stobæus, Florilegium*, cii, (c. 500 A.D.).

Doctors order for their patients a strict régime ;  
when they themselves are ill in bed they do every-  
thing that they have forbidden to others.

Look about ! there is no doctor who desires the  
health of his friends.

The doctor and the judge have the right to inflict  
death without receiving it.

*Philemon* (c. 360-262 B.C.).

*Stobæus. Florilegium*, cii.

A prattling physician is another disease to a sick  
man.

*Menander* (342-291 B.C.).

A multitude of physicians have destroyed me.

*Attributed to Menander.*

*Also to Alexander the Great* (356-323 B.C.).

*(The Emperor Hadrian (76-138 A.D.) directed these  
words to be inscribed on his tomb.)*

### *Voices from Athenian Drama*

Like a bad physician who falls ill himself,  
You lose heart and cannot find a remedy.

*Æschylus* (525-456 B.C.).

*Prometheus Bound*, 481.

It is not for a skilful leech to whine charms over a sore that craves the knife.

*Sophocles* (495-406 B.C.).  
*Ajax*, 581. *Trans.* R. C. Jebb.

Should we not go and fetch a doctor?  
The doctors in Athens! They have no skill without  
a fee.

*Aristophanes* (444-380 B.C.).  
*Plutus*, ll. 344-5.

### *Philosophers Differ*

Doctors cut, burn, and cruelly rack the sick, and complain that they do not get an adequate fee for the great benefits they effect in sickness.

*Heraclitus* (fl. 513 B.C.).  
*On the Universe*.

If the doctors are excepted there is no one more stupid than the grammarian.

*Attributed to Heraclitus*.

. . . Is the physician, taken in that strict sense of which you are speaking, a healer of the sick or a maker of money? And remember that I am now speaking of the true physician.

A healer of the sick, he replied.

*Plato* (429-347 B.C.).  
*Republic*, I, 341.

Now the most skilful physicians are those who, from their youth upwards, have combined with the knowledge of their art the greatest experience of disease ; they had better not be robust in health, and should have had all manner of diseases in their own persons. For the body, as I conceive, is not the instrument with which they cure the body : in that case we could not allow them ever to be or to have been sickly ; but they cure the body with the mind, and the mind which has become and is sick can cure nothing.

*Plato.*

*Republic, III, 408.*

The noble pilot and the wise physician, who ‘is worth many another man’—in the similitude of these let us endeavour to discover some image of the king.

What sort of image ?

Well, such as this : Every man will reflect that he suffers strange things at the hands of both of them ; the physician saves any whom he wishes to save, and any whom he wishes to maltreat he maltreats—cutting or burning them, and at the same time requiring them to bring him payments, which are a sort of tribute, of which little or nothing is spent upon the sick man, and the greater part is consumed by him and his domestics ; and the finale is that he receives money from the relations of the sick man or from some enemy of his, and puts him out of the way.

*Plato.*

*The Statesman, 297-8.*

*Trans. Benjamin Jowett.*

We are told that a patient should call in a physician ; he will not get better if he is doctored out of a book. . . . for the physician does nothing contrary to reason from motives of friendship ; he only cures a patient and takes a fee ; . . . And, indeed, if a man suspected the physician of being in league with his enemies to destroy him for a bribe, he would rather have recourse to the book. Even physicians, when they are sick, call in other physicians.

*Aristotle* (384-322 B.C.).  
*Politics*, III.  
*Trans. Benjamin Jowett.*

. . . If a physician or a steersman were in slavery, he would be obeyed.

*Diogenes the Cynic* (412-323 B.C.).  
*Trans. R. D. Hicks.*

Medicine is the chief of errors.

*Plotinus* (c. 203-262 A.D.).

Philosophy and medicine are as far remote from each other as are the boundaries of any Mysians and Phrygians.

*Plutarch* (c. 50-? 120 A.D.).  
*Moralia. Trans. Franck Cole Babbitt.*  
*Advice about keeping well.*

*Venality*

Now when Dionysius . . . fell sick, not likely to escape : Dion would have spoken with him. . . . Howbeit the physicians about him, to curry favour with the next heir and successor of the tyranny, would never let him have any time or opportunity to speak with him. For, as Timæus writeth, they gave Dionysius the elder (as he had commanded them) a strong opiate drink to cast him in a sleep, and so thereby they took from him all his senses and joined death with his sleep.

*Plutarch.*

*Lives. Dion. Trans. Sir Thomas North (1579).*

*A Grim Jest*

Yesterday the Zeus of stone from the doctor had a call,  
Though he's Zeus and though he's stone, yet to-day's his funeral.

*Nicarchus (1st Cent. A.D.)*

*Greek Anthology. Trans. G. B. Grundy.*

*Hercules to Æsculapius*

Your medicines might, perhaps, be serviceable to a few sick mortals ; but you never performed anything great or manly.

*Lucian (c. 120-200 A.D.).*

*Dialogues of the Gods, V.*

*Trans. Thomas Francklin (1781).*

*Tributes Inscribed on Stone*

*The Tomb of a Doctor*

Thou sleepest, Melanthius, lover of Children,  
And deep is the slumber thou sleepest  
Most skilled of physicians.  
But Hades, the foe of the living  
Preserved not the healer  
Who helped in the fight with disease.

*Inscription at Cos.*

*Kaibel : Epigrammata Græca, 202.*

*To a Woman Doctor*

Longing for god, you have forgot your home.  
Among the stars you lose the body's stain.  
No man shall call you dead ; the deathless gods  
Took you, who saved your countrymen from pain.  
Good-bye. Find joy in heaven. But for your friends  
Sorrow is left, and grief that never ends.

*Greek Inscription at Neoklaudiopolis.*

*Trans. D. H. Gray.*

*The Highest Compliment*

Madam, your reputation is so high,  
You now are thought as good a leech as I.

*Greek Inscription at Pergamon.*

*Trans. D. H. Gray.*

## ROME

### *Modesty*

He . . . chose rather to know the virtues of herbs and the practice of healing, and to ply, inglorious, the silent arts.

*Virgil* (70-20 B.C.).

*Aen.* XII.

*Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough.*

### *Cicero and his Friend*

Doctors, when the cause of a disease is discovered, think that the cure is discovered.

*Cicero* (106-43 B.C.).

*Tusculanarum Disputationum*, III, 23.

Do not imitate bad physicians who, in treating the diseases of others, profess to have mastered the whole art of healing, but themselves they cannot cure.

*Servius Sulpicius Rufus* (d. 43 B.C.).

*Letter to Cicero* (45 B.C.) (*Ad familiares*, IV, 5).

*Trans. W. Glynn Williams.*

### *A Doctor's Limitations*

'Tis not always in a physician's power to cure the sick ; at times the disease is stronger than trained art. You see how the blood emitted from a tender lung



leads by an unerring path to the waters of the Styx. Let the Epidaurian in person bring holy herbs, he will have no skill with which to heal wounds in the heart. The healing art knows not how to remove crippling gout, it helps not the fearful dropsy.

*Ovid* (43 B.C.—18 A.D.).  
*Pontic Epistle*, I, iii, to *Rufinus*.  
*Trans.* A. L. Wheeler.

### *His Generosity*

It were an endless matter for me, if I should gather together those plenty of examples, whereby it might appear that there are great and precious things, which cost us very little. What then? why is it that I owe some great matter to my physician and master, and fail in the satisfaction of that which they have worthily deserved? Because, of a physician and schoolmaster they become our friends, and oblige us not by the art they sell us, but by their gracious and familiar good will. To the physician, therefore (who doth no more than touch my purse, and numbereth me amongst one of those his patients, whom he ordinarily walketh to, and visiteth, prescribing me without any particular affection, what I ought to do, and what I ought to eschew :) I owe no more, and am no whit indebted : because he visiteth me not as a friend, but for that I had enjoined him to come unto me. . . . What is the cause then, why should I owe so much unto these? Not because that which they sold is more worth than we bought, but because in particular they have given us something overplus. This physician bestowed more labour on me than he was

bound to do, he had more care of me than of his reputation and credit, he not only contented not himself to prescribe me remedies, but also vouchsafed to apply and minister them. In the meanwhile he sat carefully by me, and succoured me, and prevented the suspected time, and rigour of my access ; no office distasted him, no pain disliked him ; if he had seen me bemoan myself, he was sorrowful. Amongst all those that called him, he had a particular care of me, he implied no other time in visiting the rest of his sick patients, than such wherein my infirmity remitted and gave him opportunity. To this man I am not tied, as to a physician, but as to a friend.

*Seneca* (c. 4 B.C.—65 A.D.).

*Of Benefits*, VI, 16. *Trans. Thomas Lodge* (1614).

### *Self-Advertisement*

We must not hold men in hand, as Physicians and Surgeons do their patients, and keep them longer in fear and pain, than needs, only to magnify the cure.

*Seneca.*

*Of Benefits*, XV. *Trans. Roger L'Estrange* (1616—1704).

### *Pliny's Abuse*

Neither is it to be doubted, but such Physicians as these, who having won credit and estimation once by such novelties and strange devices, shoot at no other mark but to make merchandise and enrich themselves even with the hazard of our lives. And hereupon come these lamentable and wofull consul-

leads by an unerring path to the waters of the Styx. Let the Epidaurian in person bring holy herbs, he will have no skill with which to heal wounds in the heart. The healing art knows not how to remove crippling gout, it helps not the fearful dropsy.

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### *Pliny's Abuse*

Neither is it to be doubted, but such Physicians as these, who having won credit and estimation once by such novelties and strange devices, shoot at no other mark but to make merchandise and enrich themselves even with the hazard of our lives. And hereupon come these lamentable and wofull consul-

tations of theirs about their patients, wherein you shall see them ordinarily to argue and disagree in opinion, whiles one cannot abide that another man's judgment should take place, and seem to carry away the credit of the cure. From hence also arose that Epitaph of his (whosoever he was) that caused these words to be engraven upon his unhappy tombe, 'The multitude of Physitians about me, were the cause of my death.' Thus you see how often this art from time to time hath been altered, and daily still it is turned like a garment new dressed and translated : insomuch as we are carried away with the vain humour of the Greeks, and make sail as it were with the puffs of their proud spirit : For ever as any of these new comers can vaunt his own cunning with brave words, straitwaies we put ourselves into his hands, and give him power to dispose of our life and death at his pleasure ; and without further regard, are as obedient to him as a souldiour to his captain and generall of the field. . . .

Learne this of mee, as from the mouth of a true Prophet, That whensoever this Greekish Nation shall bring into Rome their Philosophie, they will corrupt and marre all : but let them send once their Physitians hither, you shall see a greater wreck and confusion thereby. For I assure thee, they have complotted and sworne one to another for to murder all Barbarians by means of their Physick. And even to effect and bring this about, they will be fed also and take money ; to the end, that both we should trust them the rather, and they also have the better meanes to worke the feat and dispatch folk with more facility. . . .

The art of Physick hath this peculiar gift and priviledge alone, That whosoever professeth himselve

a Physician, is straitwaies beleevd, say what he will : and yet to speak a truth, there are no lies dearer sold or more dangerous than those which proceed out of a Physician's mouth. . . .

There is no law or statute to punish the ignorance of blind Physicians, though a man lost his life by them : neither was there ever any man known, who had revenge or recompence for the evill intreating or misusage under their hands. They learne their skill by endangering our lives ; and to make prooffe and experiments of their medicines, they care not to kill us. In a word, the Physician only, if he murder a man, so clear he goeth away with impunity, that none so hardy as once to twit or challenge him for it. But say that one be so bold as to charge them with any untoward dealing ; out they cry presently upon the poor patients, at them they rail with open mouth, they are found fault with their unrulinesse, distemperature, wilfulnesse, and I know not what : and thus the sillie souls that be dead and gone, are shent [i.e., put upon their trial] and bear away the blame. . . .

But for these Physicians, who are the judges themselves to determine of our lives, and who many times are not long about it, but give us a quick dispatch and send us to heaven or hell ; what regard is there had, what inquiry and examination is made of their quality and worthiness ? . . .

Is there any trade or occupation goeth beyond it for poisoning ? What is the cause of more gaping and laying wait after wills and testaments, than this ? What adulteries have beene committed under the colour hereof, even in Princes' and Emperors' palaces ?

. . .

I mean not to say ought of their extreme avarice ;

of the merchandise, spoile, and havocke that they make when they see their patients in danger of death, and drawing to their end ; nor how high they hold (as it were in open market) the easement and releafe of the sicke man's pains, whiles he is under their hands ; ne yet what pawnes and pledges they take as earnest of the bargaine, to dispatch the poore Patient out of the way at once ; and lastly, of their hidden secrets and paradoxes, which forsooth they will not divulge abroad, but for some round summe of money.

*C. Plinius Secundus* (23-79 A.D.).  
*Natural History, Book XXIX., Chap. 1.*  
*Trans. Philemon Holland* (1601).

Many physicians are not only unacquainted with the ancient authors but even venture falsely to interpret them. . . . Each looks for what he may acquire without work, keeping notoriety and gain ever before him. Each then practises as he thinks fit.

*Scribonius Largus* (47 A.D.).  
*Trans. Max Neuburger.*

### *Wit at the Doctor's Expense*

Diaulus held till recently  
 The office of physician  
 But now in strict conformity  
 A grave digger's commission.

*Martial.*  
*Epigram, I, 47.*

Diaulus undertook of late  
 The operator's art,  
 But now prefers to operate  
 The undertaker's part.

*Epigram, I, 30.*  
*Trans. Raymond Crawford.*

I'm ill. I send for Symmachus ; he's here,  
 An hundred pupils following in the rear :  
 All feel my pulse, with hands as cold as snow :  
 I had no fever then—I have it now.

*Martial (c. 40-104 A.D.).*  
*Epigram, V, 9.*

### *Ignorance*

It is the simplicity of innocence to despair of an illness because the doctors do not know the remedy.

According to our destiny we live, fall ill, recover or die, medicine serves only to keep us hopeful ; whether it helps or abandons us makes no difference ; put no trust in the hopes of physicians.

*Quintilian (40-?118 A.D.).*  
*Declamation, viii.*

### *A Despised Profession*

A doctor is nothing but a sop to conscience.

'And now,' said he, 'what do we think is the hardest profession after writing ? I think a doctor's



or a money-changer's. The doctor's, because he knows what poor men have in their insides, and when a fever will come—though I detest them specially, because they so often order me to live on duck.

*Petronius Arbiter* (c. 66 A.D.).  
*Satyricon. Trans. Michael Heseltine.*

### *The Opinion of a Great Doctor*

Doctors praise Hippocrates and consider him the greatest exponent of the art of medicine, yet they do everything to resemble him, except imitate him. . . .

What therefore remains in which they may emulate this great man? Certainly not in the perfection of language in which Hippocrates excelled; our physicians on the contrary often perpetrate two faults in one word which seems indeed incredible.

I have sought, therefore, for the reason—if indeed there is one—why, although they all admire him, they do not read his books; or, if they read, they do not understand; or if by chance they do understand, even then they do not carry theory into practice, and make his discipline a habit.

It is impossible at the same time to seek riches and to practise medicine worthily, for he who eagerly cleaves to the one must of necessity neglect the other.

If, therefore, philosophy is necessary to physicians, both when they begin to study the art and when they practise it, is it not clear that the true physician

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is also a philosopher? There is no need to labour the point when we see so many avaricious persons who are rather vendors of drugs than true physicians, and who pervert their art in an opposite direction to its true end.

*Galen* (130-200 A.D.).  
*That the good doctor is a Philosopher.*

Between robbers and physicians is this difference only, that the former's misdeeds are done in the mountains, the latter's in Rome.

*Galen.*  
*Quoted by Max Neuburger.*  
*History of Medicine.*

### *Maxims*

A disobedient patient makes an unfeeling physician.  
*Publius Syrus* (fl. 45 B.C.).

Little does the sick man consult his own interests who makes his physician his heir.

*Publius Syrus.*  
*Sententiae, 366.*

Keep the physician from your door as long as you can.

*Flavius Valens* (c. 328-378 A.D.).

*A Fable*

Eunomus had once pronounced that Gaius would die of his sickness. He slipped away, Fate—not the doctor—aiding. A little afterwards the doctor saw, or thought he saw, the man, pale, and in death's very likeness. 'Who art thou?' he asked. 'Gaius,' he answered. 'Art thou alive?' He answered 'No.' 'And what now dost thou here?' 'I come,' said he, 'at the behest of Dis, because I still retained knowledge of the world and men, to summon to him doctors.' Eunomus grew stiff with fright. Then Gaius: 'Fear nothing, Eunomus: I said, as all men say, that no man who is wise calls you a doctor.'

*Ausonius* (310–c.394 A.D.).

*Epigram IV.*

*Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn White.*

*Unwilling Cruelty*

You shrink from the hands of a butcher, but are the hands of the Sons of Hippocrates when they torture you more gentle?

They cut into the living flesh and the scalpel bathes in fresh blood as they excise diseased tissue. But consider that surgeons use the knife sorrowfully and that they operate for our good; that which restores health is not cruel.

*Aurelius Prudentius Clemens.*

(c. 348–410 A.D.)

*Hymnos peri Stephanon.*



### III. MEDIÆVAL

I implore every doctor, that before he begins his treatment, he prays God, the Father of Healing, to the end that his work may be finished prosperously. Moreover, let him not be in mortal sin ; and let him implore the patient to be also free from grievous sin. Let him offer up a second prayer for the sick person, and implore the Heavenly Father, the Physician and Balm-Giver for all mankind, to prosper the work he is entering upon and save him from the disgrace and shame of failure.

*From the Preface to a Book of the Hereditary  
Physicians of Ireland (1352).*

## MEDIÆVAL

The Middle Ages are usually taken to be the centuries which elapsed between the deposition of Romulus Augustulus (476) and the fall of Constantinople (1453). It was a time during which Medicine made little advance except for an improved knowledge of drugs due to the Arabians, although it must be remembered, in justice to the period, that it saw the foundation of the great Medical School of Salerno, and also the establishment of the first rudimentary hospitals for the sick.

The qualified 'leech' of the Middle Ages derived his knowledge almost entirely from Arabian commentaries on the books of Hippocrates and Galen and had little or no practical training; a vivid picture of him is given by Chaucer. A large part of actual practice, however, was in the hands of unlearned men, generally in religious orders, who were probably rather like hospital orderlies or the village nurse, and acted independently.

It is therefore not surprising that the mediæval doctors were held in low esteem by the public. John of Salisbury expresses very clearly the opinion of the profession entertained by a cultured layman, whilst the Italian poet, Petrarch, two centuries later, poured scorn on physicians in four books of invectives. Quotations from both authors are given below along with others from less well-known writers which show that ignorance, greed and indifference to the life of his patient, are the chief accusations brought against the medical man; of praise there is almost none.

*Dignitaries of the Church*

Therefore, we and our household, Christ being our leader, have left the heat and weariness of the City, and at the same time the opinions of the physicians who attend us and contend with each other. For they have but little learning, and although they are assiduous in attention kill a large number of sick people in a most dutiful manner. But as a matter of friendship Justus (the physician) has joined our company, who, if I may joke at such a sad time, is, I would say, more skilled in the art of Chiron than in that of Machaon. And therefore Christ is to be most earnestly besought that the divine power may restore that health which our care has been unable to bring about.

*Sidonius Apollinaris (c. 430-488),  
Bishop of Arverna in Clermont.*

*Letter to Agricola.*

*Trans. H. P. Cholmeley.*

It is sometimes asked why the art of medicine is not included among the other liberal arts. It is because they deal with single causes, but medicine with all. For a medical man should know the *ars grammatica*, that he may be able to understand and expound that which he reads ; and the *ars rhetorica*, that he may be able to support with sound arguments the matters which he deals with ; and also the *ars dialectica*, so that by the exercise of reason he may investigate the causes of sickness for the purposes of cure. So too he should know the *ars arithmetica* so as to calculate the time of the accession (of fever) and its periods ;

and he should be acquainted with the *ars geometrica*, so that he may teach what every man ought to consider with regard to different districts and the lie of different places ('*qualitates regionum et locorum situs*'). Moreover, he must know something of music, for many things can be done for the sick by means of this art as we read that David delivered Saul from the evil spirit by means of music. Asclepiades restored a madman to his former health by means of a concord of sounds (*symphonia*). Lastly, let him have a knowledge of astronomy by means of which he may understand the calculation of the stars and the changes of the seasons. For as a physician says, our bodies are affected (*commutantur*) by their qualities, and therefore medicine is called a second philosophy; for either art arrogates to itself the whole man, since by the one the soul and by the other the body is cured.

*Isidorus Hispalensis* (c. 560-636).

*Archbishop of Seville.*

*Liber Etymologiarum.*

*Trans. H. P. Holmeley.*

### *Scholarly Jewish Physicians*

It is in keeping with the character of the physician that he should, in his mode of life, be content with well prepared food in moderation and be no rioter or glutton. Also it is a shame that he should suffer from a long drawn out disease, else the vulgar will say: 'If he cannot cure himself, how can he cure others?'

*Isaac Judæus* (830-940).

*Guide to Physicians.*

*Trans. Max Neuburger.*



A doctor and the Angel of Death both kill, but the former charges a fee.

For that Science (Medicine) which is exalted above all sciences, for which pearls nor coral can be exchanged, whose price is above rubies, have they made, as it were, but the value of a sycamore. For of such hath Hippocrates said ' A foolish physician is worse than the disease for day by day he doth multiply destruction.'

*Joseph ben Meir Zabara* (c. 1150-1200).  
*The Book of Delight.*  
*Trans. Moses Hadras.*

### *Arabian Warnings*

The blunders of a doctor are felt not by himself but by others.

*Ar-Rumi* (836-896).

An ignorant doctor is the aide-de-camp of death.

*Avicenna* (980-1037).

The physician walks along and the Angel of Death walks behind him with sleeves turned up for work.

*Hajire.*

*Contrary Opinions from Persia*

There are four sorts of men from whom not one atom of good has accrued to me—physicians, devotees, astrologers, and charm mongers.

*Abu Tabir al-Khusrawani (10th Century).*

*Trans. Edward G. Browne.*

Now among the servants essential to kings are the Secretary, the Poet, the Astrologer, and the Physician, with whom he can in no wise dispense.

*Chahar Maqāla of Nizami-i-Aruzī (12th Century).*

*Trans. Edward G. Browne.*

*A Chinese Poet*

To be a calligraphist requires the wasting of paper ;  
to be a good doctor requires the sacrificing of lives.

*Su Tung Po (fl. c. 960 A.D.).*

*Appreciation from India*

The Physician who understands the healing powers of roots and herbs is a man ; he who understands the waters and fire, a demon ; he who understands the efficacy of prayer, a prophet ; he who understands the virtues of quicksilver, a god.

*Indian Saying (c. 1000–1500).*

*A Physician of Salerno*

When the doctor enters the dwelling of his patient, he should not appear haughty, nor covetous, but should greet with kindly, modest demeanour those who are present, and then seating himself near the sick man accept the drink which is offered him (*sic*) and praise in a few words the beauty of the neighbourhood, the situation of the house, and the well-known generosity of the family—if it should seem to him suitable to do so. The patient should be put at his ease before the examination begins, and the pulse should be felt deliberately and carefully. The fingers should be kept on the pulse at least until the hundredth beat in order to judge of its kind and character; the friends standing round will be all the more impressed because of the delay, and the physician's words will be received with just that much more attention.

*Archimathæus (c. 1100).*

*The coming of a physician to his patient.*

*Trans. J. J. Walsh.*

*A Great Prelate and Philosopher*

The theoretical physicians do what concerns them, and for love of you will even go further. You can get from them information as to the nature and causes of particular phenomena, they are judges of health, of sickness, and of the mean state. Health, so far as words go, they provide and preserve, and as concerning the mean state they bid one incline in the direction of health. Of sickness they foresee and declare the

causes, and lay down its beginning, its continuance, and its decline. What more shall I say? When I hear them talk I fancy that they can raise the dead and are in no way inferior to either Æsculapius or Mercury.

And yet with all my admiration I am much troubled at one matter, and that is they are so singularly at variance in their discussions and in the opinions which are drawn from them. For this one thing I do know, that contraries cannot both be true at the same time.

Again, what shall I say about the practising physicians?

God forbid that I should say anything bad about them! since for my sins I fall only too often into their hands. They should rather be soothed by politeness than angered by words, and I do not wish that they should treat me hardly, nor could I endure all the evils about which they constantly talk. I would rather say with blessed Solomon, 'All medicine is from the Lord, and he that is wise will not despise it.'

Nor is anyone more useful or more necessary than the physician so that he be faithful and full of foresight. For who can say enough in his praise who is the craftsman of health and the begetter of life in that he takes after the Lord and stands in his place, for that health which the Lord gives as a Prince, the physician, as steward and minister, administers and dispenses.

It is of little moment if some physicians sell an imaginary benefit, and that they may appear the more honest take no fee before the patient is well. But such are dishonest in that they give themselves the

credit for a recovery which is due to time, or rather to the gift of God ; for it is due to God and to the natural powers of his constitution that the sick man is raised up. Few are they who act in this way, for you will always hear physicians advising one another as follows :—‘ take your fee while the patient still feels ill.’

Personally I do not care much if their actions and advice are in opposition, for I know that contraries often produce the same effect. But if a patient of theirs should come near death they will put forward the most cogent reasons for showing that his life should be no more prolonged. And, too, it is said that for those whom they have broken down by long fasting and who are at the point of death they will provide absolutely useless broths and delicate meats. Perhaps you look for me to say, what the common people say, that physicians are the class of men who kill other men in the most polite and courteous manner. Well, you will be disappointed ; God forbid that I should do them this injury !

*John of Salisbury (1118–1180).*

*Polycraticus.*

*Trans. H. P. Chalmers.*

### *Criticism from the Doctor Mirabilis*

Medical men are ignorant of simple medicine, and at the mercy of uneducated apothecaries.

In compound medicine they go entirely astray, and are guilty of 36 main defects and countless subsidiary ones.

Not one among a thousand knows how to separate the harmful parts from the helpful in simple laxatives.

Medical men don't learn to know the drugs they use, nor their prices.

Almost the whole crowd of medical men are ignorant how to extract the virtue from the gross substance of rhubarb.

*Roger Bacon* (1214-1294).

*De Erroribus Medicorum. Trans. A. G. Little and E. Witherington.*

### *Surgical Ideals*

It is necessary that a surgeon should have a temperate and moderate disposition. That he should have well-formed hands, long slender fingers, a strong body, not inclined to tremble, and with all his members trained to the capable fulfilment of the wishes of his mind. He should be well grounded in natural science, and should know not only medicine but every part of philosophy; should know logic well, so as to be able to understand what is written; to talk properly, and to support what he has to say by good reasons.

*Lanfranc of Milan* (d. 1315).

*Chirurgia Magna* (1296).

*Quoted by J. J. Walsh in Mediæval Medicine.*

It is impossible that a surgeon should be expert who does not know not only the principles, but everything worth while knowing about medicine, just

as it is impossible for a man to be a good physician who is entirely ignorant of the art of surgery.

*Henri de Mondeville (1260-1320).*

*Surgical Treatise.*

*Quoted by J. J. Walsh.*

### *A Poet's Invectives*

I know that your sick bed is continually besieged by physicians, a fact which is my chief cause of terror, for they disagree of set purpose, and even he who can bring forth nothing new is ashamed to follow in the footsteps of another.

Neither is there any doubt (as Pliny gracefully says) that they are always hunting after renown for some novelty and so traffic in our lives. Also in this art alone does it happen that a man is taken at his own valuation, and that anyone who holds himself out as a physician is at once accepted as such ; but although in no form of fraud is there greater danger, yet we do not regard it, so great is the attraction of a man's own particular delusion. Besides there is no law to punish human ignorance, no exemplary capital penalty ; they learn by our danger and gain experience through our death. The physician alone can kill a man with absolute impunity. . . .

Therefore I implore you, choose one out of the many who surround you, not on account of his eloquence, but as being conspicuous for his knowledge and trustworthiness ; for now, forgetful of their own profession, they have dared to come forth from their lairs and seek the grove of the poet and the

rhetorician's field of action, and, not with any idea of healing, but merely to gain a dialectical advantage, they surround the beds of our unhappy sick and dispute with mighty bellowings.

Moreover, when the sick are dying, though the end be unfortunate, they give themselves airs by tangling up Hippocratic problems in a web of Ciceronian oratory. (*'Hippocraticos nodos Tulliano stamine permiscentes sinistro quamvis eventu superbiunt'*) ; nor do they brag about the efficiency of their remedies and treatment, but only of the empty prettiness of their language.

Lest anyone of your physicians should say that I am inventing, I have rested my arguments nearly all through this letter upon him whom I so often quote, namely Pliny, for he constantly mentions medical men, and speaks of them more often and more truly than any one else. Let them therefore hear him. It is obvious, he says, that any one among them who has a fluent tongue (*loquendo polleat*) on that account becomes master of our life and death. But my pen has carried me far beyond the limits which I had set myself, so let me here make an end, by telling you to shun the physician who is eminent not for his knowledge but solely for his powers of speech, as you would a lurking assassin or a poisoner.

*Petrarch (1304-1374).*

*Letter to Pope Clement VI.*

*Preface to Invectives, Bk. I.*

*Trans. H. P. Cholmeley.*

A doctor is a mercenary and bad workman.



Doctors are great liars ; if you do not believe me ask the common people who have a proverb—‘ To lie like a doctor.’

*Petrarch.*

*Invectives, Bk. I. Chs. i. and xi.*

In this point, too, we disagree, in that you say that the performances of medical men are wonderful. What performances, I ask you, unless you reckon this among the miracles, that you among all classes of men are nearly always ill. And so among large populations one can always tell your complexion by its pallor.

*[Apparently it was a universal mediæval tradition that medical men were always pale.]*

A celebrated doctor said one day in my presence, ‘In detracting from the art to which I am indebted for so much wealth and so many clients, I know that I lay myself open to be called ungrateful, but truth must be upheld before everything else. I believe and I frankly say and maintain that, if a hundred or a thousand people, all of the same age, of the same constitution and habits, were suddenly seized by the same illness, and one-half of them were to place themselves under the care of doctors, such as they are in our time, whilst the other half intrusted themselves to Nature and to their own discretion, I have not the slightest doubt that there would be more cases of death amongst the former, and more cases of recovery among the latter.’ Another doctor, even more famous and learned, with whom I had one day a confidential talk, candidly and prudently answered my

question why he did not abstain from the food he forbade others, by saying : ' My friend, if a doctor did himself what he advises others to do or bade them do the same as he does, he would either suffer in health or in estate.'

*Petrarch.*

*Thoughts from the Letters. Trans. J. Lohse.*

### *More Italian Scorn*

Jurisprudence and medicine have this in common that they are humiliating to contemplate.

Certainly it is not for doctors to despise and make light of administrators of the law for exactly the same charges can be made against them.

But, Nicolo, what do you think of these practitioners? Can anything do more harm? Owing to the stupidity of the people they kill more than they cure and experiment to the danger and loss of those in distress. Surely their absurdities and abuse of their art condemn the art and science of medicine? Our errors, as you call them, are slight compared with yours. The imbeciles of the law, as you say, may cause loss of money and goods to their clients but your mistakes are made at the hazard of life itself. We touch the purse only, you destroy the body as well as worldly goods for you take life from those who die and a fee from those who survive. We blunder in little things, you in great. Kings, princes and

lords die as a result of your negligence, by ours, only some legacy or inheritance is imperilled. . . .

The professors of this art are often more fit to dig clods than to practise medicine : it is ridiculous to see bungling rustics without learning, science or intelligence, profess the art of medicine ; by impudence, they gain the trust of the foolish populace who lead them to sick beds where, far from relieving the illness, they make it worse. It would be better for human life if these men were never born since they seem to arise for the destruction of the race. . . .

It was not without reason that physicians were expelled from Rome : it is natural for lazy and mean persons to embrace a base profession in order to make money. What indeed is there in it to praise or admire ? You inspect the urine, fæces and sputum of the sick. You look askance with frowning brows, as if so severe an illness demanded great attention. Then you feel the pulse, and judge the forces of nature. A consultation is called and after many disputes you come down to prescribing—as you call it. There are often so many different opinions and so little power to help the patient, that your science, which you claim to be stable, reliable and consistent, appears capricious, inconstant and uncertain. If the potion, by chance, rather than virtue, does good, you laud the cure to the skies ; if it does harm, the whole blame is cast upon the patient.

*Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459).  
A Disputation upon Law and Medicine.*

The doctor, whose knowledge reached no farther,  
perhaps, than to cure children of the itch. . . .

*Giovanni Boccaccio* (1313-1375).

*Decameron*, VIII, ix. *Trans. anonymous* (1741).

### *Doctor's Kill*

For morthereres aren mony leches (physicians).  
Lorde hem amende !

*William Langland* (1330 ?-1400 ?).

*Piers the Plowman*, 6.

The physicians have killed me  
With their potions and drugs,  
And yet I believe them ;  
I am wax in their hands.

*From the Farce of Master Pathelin.*

*Anonymous* (c. 1400).

### *Portrait of a Mediæval Physician*

With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik ;  
In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,  
To speke of phisik and of surgerye ;  
For he was grounded in astronomye.  
He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel  
In houres by his magyk natureel.  
Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent  
Of his ymàges for his pacient.

He knew the cause of everich maladye,  
 Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,  
 And where they engendred and of what humour;  
 He was a verray parfit praktisour,  
 The cause y-knowe and of his harm the roote,  
 Anon he yaf the sikē man his boote.  
 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries  
 To sende him droggès and his letuaries,  
 For ech of hem made oother for to wynne,  
 Hir friendshiphe nas nat newè to bigynne.  
 Wel knew he the oldē Esculapius  
 And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus,  
 Olde Ypocras, Haly and Galyen,  
 Serapion, Razis and Avycen,  
 Averrois, Damascien and Constantyn,  
 Bernard and Gatèsden and Gilbertyn.  
 Of his dietē mesurable was he,  
 For it was of no superfluitee,  
 But of greet norissyng and digestible.  
 His studie was but litel on the Bible.  
 In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,  
 Lynèd with taffata and with sendal.  
 And yet he was but esy of dispence,  
 He keptē that he wan in pestilence.  
 For gold in phisik is a cordial,  
 Therfore he lovède gold in special.

*Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?-1400).*  
*Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.*



#### IV. FIFTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

Make much of thy Physitian : let not an Emperick  
or Mounti-bancking Quacksaluer peepe in at thy win-  
dow, but set thy Gates wide open to entertaine thy  
learned Physitian : Honour him, make much of him.  
Such a Physitian is God's second, and in a duell or  
single fight (of this nature) will stand brauely to thee.  
A good Physitian comes to thee in the shape of an  
*Angell*, and therefore let him boldly take thee by the  
hand, for he has been in God's garden, gathering  
herbes : and soueraigne rootes to cure thee ; A good  
Physitian deales in simples, and will be simply honest  
with thee in thy preseruatiō.

*Thomas Dekker* (1570?–1641?).  
*London looke Backe.*

## FIFTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

The writers in this section are influenced by the Renaissance, which was born in Italy in the middle of the 15th Century and, spreading through Europe, came to England in the 17th. The period is long and those who have recorded their opinion of doctors vary widely in outlook, in nationality and in education, but there is one characteristic common to all, derived from the so-called rebirth of learning—wit or intellectual agility. Savonarola is an exception; he alone speaks straight from the heart and it is notorious that he had no sympathy with the Renaissance.

The new enthusiasm for learning was shocked by the ignorance of many doctors, and disapproval was even recorded in the statutes of Henry VIII, promulgated to improve medical education and to eliminate quacks. They failed in their object and the Elizabethans found in the medical profession an excellent butt for their exuberant wit. John Lyly, however, said a word of sober praise, and Thomas Dekker, amid much blunt 'ragging,' suddenly flashed one of the most beautiful metaphors ever conceived about a doctor.

With the 17th Century the wit becomes graver and at the same time more quaint; Burton and Fuller are examples. We have been fortunate in finding a 'surgeon' a 'mere dull physician' and a 'good physician' portrayed in the 'Characters' which came into fashion and flourished at this time, especially after the Civil War.

At the end of the period two very different writers recorded their views of the profession; Molière



with his bitter sarcasm, and the gentle Jeremy Taylor, he who prayed to be delivered from 'tediousness of spirit.'

Prominent English physicians of the time were Thomas Linacre (1460-1524) the friend of Erasmus, and founder of the Royal College of Physicians; the quaint Andrew Boorde (1490-1549), author of the well-known *Via recta*; John Kaye or Caius (1510-1573), founder of Caius College; Sir Theodore Mayerne (1573-1655), physician to James I; William Harvey (1578-1657), discoverer of the circulation of the blood, and the great clinician, Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689).

### *Praise from a Saint-*

The physician that bringeth love and charity to the sick, if he be good and kind and learned and skilful, none can be better than he. Love teacheth him everything, and will be the measure and rule of all the measures and rules of medicine.

*Savonarola* (1452-1498).

*Quoted by R. Hingston Fox, Dr. Fothergill and his Friends.*

### *—and from a Scholar*

Antiquity . . . rightly both believed and proclaimed that no reward worthy enough can be paid to a skilled and trustworthy doctor. . . .

The theologian makes men repent of their sins, but it is owing to the doctor that there is anyone to

repent. It is vain to be a physician of souls if the soul for whom the antidote was prepared has already fled. . . .

We owe gratitude to those who drive off the enemy who flies at our throats ; are we not more indebted to the doctor who daily fights for our safety against the mortal enemies of life ?

*Erasmus* (1466-1536).  
*Declamatio in laudem artis medicæ.*

### *Judgment by Physicians*

Knowledge makes the physician, not the name or the school.

*Paracelsus* (1493-1541).

Judge a physician by his cures.

*Paracelsus.*

We give our souls to theologians, who for the greater part are heretics. Our bodies we commit to the physicians, who never themselves take any physic. And then we intrust our goods to lawyers who never go to law against one another.

*François Rabelais* (1483-1553).  
*Pantagruel*, Bk. III, Ch. xxix.  
*Trans. Thomas Urquhart* (1611-1660).

That Physician will hardly be thought very careful  
of the health of others who neglects his own.

*Pantagruel.*

*Prologue to the Fourth Book.*

*Trans. Peter Motteux (1660-1718).*

The practice of Physic has been properly enough  
compared by Hippocrates to a fight and a farce acted  
by three Persons, the Patient, the Physician and the  
Disease.

*Pantagruel, Bk. IV.*

*Epistle dedicatory.*

*Trans. Peter Motteux.*

### *A Woman's Warning*

Also for God's sake beware what medicines you  
take of any physicians of London ; I shall never  
trust to them because of your father and my uncle,  
whose souls God absolve.

*Margaret Paston*

*to her husband John Paston,*

*8th June, 1464.*

*(Spelling modernized.)*

*The Paston Letters, II, 490.*

*Ed. James Gairdner.*

### *Unfavourable Opinions of Great Men*

Every man desires to acquire wealth in order that  
he may give it to the doctors, the destroyers of life,  
therefore they ought to be rich.

Strive to preserve your health ; and in this you will the better succeed in proportion as you keep clear of the physicians, for their drugs are a kind of alchemy concerning which there are no fewer books than there are medicines.

*Leonardo da Vinci* (1452-1519).

*Notebooks* (1515).

*Ed. McCurdy.*

Though yet amongst these Sciences those only are in esteem that come nearest to common sense, that is to say, Folly. Divines are half starv'd, Naturalists out of heart, Astrologers laught at, and Logicians slighted ; onely the Physician is worth all the rest. And amongst them too, the more unlearned, impudent, or unadvised he is, the more he is esteem'd, even among Princes. For Physick, especially as it is now profest by most men, is nothing but a branch of Flattery, no less than Rhetorick.

*Erasmus* (1466-1536).

*The Praise of Folly.*

*Trans. John Wilson* (1668).

### *Ignorance*

When an ignorant man becomes a doctor a sign is affixed which means nothing ; it is like putting a barrell at the door of a house where no wine is sold.

*Johannes Trithemius* (1462-1516).

*The Laws of the Realm*

The science and connyng of physyke and surgerie, to the perfecte knowledge whereof bee requisite bothe grete lernyng and ripe experience, ys daily within this Royalme exercised by a grete multitude of ignorant persones, of whom the grete partie have no maner of insight in the same nor in any other kynde of lernyng.

*Statute, 3 Hen. VIII, cap. 11.*

It is nowe well knownen that the surgeons admytted wooll doo no cure to any persone, but where they shall knowe to be rewarded with a greater soome or rewarde than the cure extendeth unto, for in cace they wolde mynistrer theyre coonnyng to sore people unrewarded, there shoulde not so manye rotte and perishe to deathe for lacke of helpe of surgerye as dailie doo.

*Statute, 32 Hen. VIII, cap. 42.*

*Three Faces*

Three faces the Phisition hath ;  
 First as an Angell he,  
 When he is sought ; next when he helps,  
 A God he seems to be ;  
 And last of all, when he has made  
 The sicke, diseased, well,  
 And asks his guerdon, then he seems  
 An oughly Fiend of Hell.

*Latin epigram ascribed to*

*Euricius Cordus, 1525.*

*Trans. Timothy Kendall (1577).*

*Downright Condemnation*

You are physician also surgeon. Why ?  
That every man beneath the sod may lie  
And by your hand, and so by poison die.

*Johannes Secundus* (1511-1536).

There is nothing to touch the arrogance of doctors.

*Hadrianus Junius* (1512-1575).

Doctors are not content to hold rule over sickness, they make health itself ill, so that there may be no escape from their authority. . . .

Where, in an honourable profession, are to be found men so jealous and disparaging one of another as doctors, giving rise indeed to the saying *Invidia Medicorum* ? And where will you see people of the same vocation who agree less among themselves ? . . .

There was a doctor who asserted that no one complained of him. His friend replied, ' Why and truly for you have killed them all.'

Doctors do not like the healthy for they gain nothing from them, nor the saints in Paradise, because they effect cures. . . .

. . . Doctors are naturally avaricious.

*Guillaume Bouchet* (1526-1606).  
*Les Soirées.*

*Unstinted Praise*

I for mine own part think that in all Europe there are not lawyers more learned, divines more profound, physicians more expert than in England.

*John Lyly* (1553-1606).  
*Euphues.*

Of all the liberal sciences physic is one which as it giveth place to none whatsoever in beauty, in outward show, and in pleasure or delight, so it alloweth a great reward and salary to those that love it, even as much as their life and health comes to.

*Philemon Holland* (1552-1637).

If ever the human race is raised to its highest practicable level intellectually, morally and physically, the science of medicine will perform that service.

*René Descartes* (1596-1650).

Physicians (are) the only true natural philosophers.

*Thomas Hobbes* (1588-1679).  
*The Elements of Philosophy. Dedicatory Letter.*

*Playwrights Scoff—*

As fat as a physician, and as giddy-headed.

*George Chapman* (1559?-1634).  
*All Fools*, III, i.

( 71 )

I am a true doctor indeed, that tie up my living  
in the knots of winding sheets.

*Thomas Dekker* (1570?-1641?).  
*Fortunatus*, V, ii.

He might have met with three fencers in this time  
and have received less hurt than by meeting one  
doctor of physic.

*Thomas Dekker*.  
*The Honest Whore*, Pt. I, IV, iv.

You make no more haste now, than a beggar upon  
pattens; or a physician to a patient that has no  
money.

*Ben Jonson* (1573?-1637).  
*The Poetaster*, V, i.

Many funerals discredit a physician.

*Ben Jonson*.

She'll use some prepared antidote of her own,  
Lest the physicians should re-poison her.

*John Webster* (c. 1580?-1625?).  
*Duchess of Malfi*, II, 1.

Physicians are the cobblers, rather the botchers, of  
men's bodies; as the one patches our tattered clothes,  
so the other solders our diseased flesh.

*John Ford* (fl. 1639).  
*The Lover's Melancholy*, I, ii.



—and Poets Jeer

Trust not the physician  
His antidotes are poison, and he slays  
More than you rob.

*Shakespeare* (1564-1616).  
*Timon of Athens*, IV, iii, 435.

The patient dies while the physician sleeps.

*Shakespeare*.  
*Lucrece*, l. 904.

GONZALO : You rub the sore,  
When you should bring the plaster. . . .

ANTONIO : And most chirurgonly.

*Shakespeare*.  
*The Tempest*, II, i, 133.

When the artless doctor sees  
No one hope, but of his fees,  
And his skill runs on the lees,  
Sweet spirit, comfort me !

When his potion and his pill,  
Has, or none, or little skill,  
Meet for nothing but to kill,  
Sweet spirit, comfort me !

*Robert Herrick* (1591-1634).  
*Litany to the Holy Spirit*.

For men are brought to worse distresses  
By taking physic, than diseases ;  
And therefore continuously recover,  
As soon as doctors give them over.

*Attributed to Samuel Butler (1612-1680).*

The first physicians by debauch were made ;  
Excess began and sloth sustains the trade.

*John Dryden (1631-1700).*  
*Epis., XIV, l. 73.*

*But Two Make Amends*

The whole faculty has always been ready to oblige  
me.

*John Dryden.*

A skilful leech is better far  
Than half a hundred men of war.

*Samuel Butler (1612-1680).*  
*Hudibras, Pt. I, Canto 2, 245.*

*Sceptical France*

Even if doctors apply all their knowledge, and act  
in good faith they often do harm when they think to  
do good and do not perceive their mistake until the  
patient has passed beyond. . . .

. . . The ignorance of many so-called doctors we  
know to be so great that it would provide subject  
matter for a large volume. . . .

I shall add a word about . . . surgeons ; nothing new certainly, for every day we hear many accusations against them ; that they carry on to twenty or thirty dressings what could be finished at the third or fourth : that they prolong wounds and sometimes stir them up instead of healing them ; and that their wretched ignorance often makes it necessary to amputate an arm or leg.

*Estienne Henri (1528-1598).*  
*Apology for Herodotus.*

There is no one who worships the doctors more than I do when I am ill, or who thinks their art more unreliable when I am well. You will think this proposition ridiculous from the first ; that I respect the art of those whom I consider uncertain ; and perhaps you will say that sick in body I am sane in mind ; and healthy in body I am sick in mind. I, on the contrary, say, if their aphorism is true that the condition of mind and body are in sympathy, that being sick in body I am also sick in mind which makes me worship the doctors.

*Pasquier Etienne (1529-1615).*  
*Letter to M. Tournibus.*

### *The Great Essayist*

. . . after this manner do our physicians proceed, who eat melons and drink iced wines, whilst they confine their patients to syrups and sops.

*Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592).*  
*Of Vanity. Trans. Charles Cotton (1630-1687).*

The arts that promise to keep our bodies and souls in health promise a great deal ; but, withal, there are none that less keep their promise. And, in our time, those who make profession of these arts amongst us, less manifest the effects than any other sort of men ; one may say of them, at the most, that they sell medicinal drugs ; but that they are physicians, a man cannot say.

The art of physic is not so fixed, that we need be without authority for whatever we do ; it changes according to climates and moons, according to Fernel<sup>1</sup> and to Scaliger. If your physician does not think it good for you to sleep, to drink wine, or to eat such and such meats, never trouble yourself ; I will find you another that shall not be of his opinion ; the diversity of medical arguments and opinions embraces all sorts and forms.

I consult little about the alterations I feel : for these doctors take advantage ; when they have you at their mercy, they surfeit your ears with their prognostics ; and formerly surprising me, weakened with sickness, injuriously handled me with their dogmas and magisterial fopperies—one while menacing me with great pains, and another with approaching death.

*Montaigne.*

*Of Experience. Trans. Charles Cotton.*

Physicians are not content to deal only with the sick, but they will moreover corrupt health itself,

<sup>1</sup> Physician to Henri II.

for fear men should at any time escape their authority. Do they not, from a continual and perfect health, draw the argument of some great sickness to ensue ?

And, besides, they have a very advantageous way of making use of all sorts of events : for what fortune, nature, or any other cause (of which the number is infinite), produces of good and healthful in us, it is the privilege of physic to attribute to itself ; all the happy successes that happen to the patient, must be thence derived ; the accidents that have cured me, and a thousand others, who do not employ physicians, physicians usurp to themselves : and as to ill accidents, they either absolutely disown them, in laying the fault upon the patient, by such frivolous reasons as they are never at a loss for ; as ‘ he lay with his arms out of bed,’ or ‘ he was disturbed with the rattling of a coach ’ :

‘ . . . rhedarum transitus arcto <sup>1</sup>  
Vicorum inflexu ’ :

or ‘ somebody had set open the casement,’ or ‘ he had lain upon his left side ’ : or ‘ he had some disagreeable fancies in his head ’ : in sum, a word, a dream or a look, seems to them excuse sufficient wherewith to palliate their own errors : or, if they so please, they even make use of our growing worse, and do their business in this way which can never fail them : which is by buzzing us in the ear, when the disease is more inflamed by their medicaments, that it had been much worse but for those remedies ; he, whom

<sup>1</sup> The passage of the wheels in the narrow turning of the street. *Juvenal*, III, 236.

from an ordinary cold they have thrown into a double tertian-ague, had but for them been in a continued fever. They do not much care what mischief they do, since it turns to their own profit. In earnest, they have reason to require a very favourable belief from their patients ; and, indeed, it ought to be a very easy one, to swallow things so hard to be believed. Plato said very well,<sup>1</sup> that physicians were the only men who might lie at pleasure, since our health depends upon the vanity and falsity of their promises.

Who ever saw one physician approve of another's prescription, without taking something away, or adding something to it ? by which they sufficiently betray their tricks, and make it manifest to us that they therein more consider their own reputation, and consequently their profit, than their patient's interest. He was a much wiser man of their tribe, who of old gave it as a rule, that only one physician should undertake a sick person ; for if he do nothing to purpose, one single man's default can bring no great scandal upon the art of medicine ; and, on the contrary, the glory will be great if he happen to have success ; whereas, when there are many, they at every turn bring a disrepute upon their calling, forasmuch as they oftener do hurt than good. They ought to be satisfied with the perpetual disagreement which is found in the opinions of the principal masters and ancient authors of this science, which is only known to men well read, without discovering to the vulgar

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, III.

the controversies and various judgments which they still nourish and continue amongst themselves.

*Montaigne.*

*Of the Resemblance of Children to the Fathers.*

*Trans. Charles Cotton.*

### *Montaigne Relents at Last*

I honour physicians, not according to the precept<sup>1</sup> for their necessity (for to this passage may be opposed another of the prophet reproving King Asa for having recourse to a physician), but for themselves, having known many very good men of that profession, and most worthy to be beloved. I do not attack them; 'tis their art I inveigh against, and do not much blame them for making their advantage of our folly, for most men do the same.

*Montaigne.*

*Of the Resemblance of Children to the Fathers.*

### *Physicians in Spain*

There be some leeches that kill a sick man whom they have under cure, and will nevertheless be well paid for their pains. Now all they do is but to write a short bill of certain medicines, which the apothecary, and not they, doth afterward compound. . . .

*Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616).*

*Don Quixote, Pt. II, Ch. lxxi.*

*Trans. Thomas Shelton (fl. 1612-1620).*

<sup>1</sup> *Eccles. xxxviii. 1.*

*Concerning Surgeons*

A good surgeon should have an eagle's eye, a lion's heart and a lady's hand.

*Saying attributed to Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586).*

Then riseth out of his chair, fleering and jeering,  
this miraculous surgeon, gloriously glittering like the  
man in the moon, with his bracelets about his arms,  
therein many precious jewels and stones of Saint  
Vincent his rocks, his fingers full of rings, a silver  
case with instruments hanging at his girdle, and a gilt  
*spatula* sticking in his hat, with a rose and crown  
fixed on the same, standing upon his comparisons,  
and said unto me that he would open the wound,  
and if it were before my face: for (said he) my  
business lieth not in London, but abroad in the  
country, and with such persons that I cannot, nor  
will not tarry for you, nor for no other whatsoever.  
And now here he did begin to brag and boast as  
though all the keys of knowledge did hang at his  
girdle.

*William Clowes (1540-1604).*

*A Proved Practice for all Young Chirurgeons (1591).*

*The Cure of a Certain Clothier.*

*Epigram's at the Doctor's Expense*

How differs, I pray, the Physician's part  
From his brother, the Surgeon's healing art?



I tell you, the one by his drugs and pills,  
By his knife the other, the churchyard fills :  
The diff'rence only from the Hangman's seen  
Their work's clumsy and slow, his quick and clean.

*The Physician, Surgeon & Hangman.*  
*Latin epigram by Maximilianus Urientius*  
*of Ghent (1559-1613).*  
*Trans. H. P. Dodd (Epigrammatists).*

*To Cinna, A Physician*

Thou cur'st Diseases, How ? Thou kill'st the Sick :  
And what thou dost (like *Judas*) thou dost quick :  
Thy Patient is blest : Thou wilt not wrong  
His Patience, to let him languish long.

*John Owen (1560?-1622).*  
*Epigrams dedicated to Prince Henry, I, 86.*

Physicians take Gold, but seldom give :  
They Physick give, take none ; yet healthy live.  
A Diet They prescribe ; the Sick must for't  
Give Gold ; Each other Thus supply-support.

*Epigrams, Bk. I, No. 53.*

Physicians and Lawyers in their Trade  
Are like, their gain of others loss is made.  
To Patients Those, to Clients These apply  
Their helping hand, but help themselves thereby.

*John Owen.*  
*Latin Epigrams, Bk. I, No. 71.*  
*Trans. Thomas Harvey (1677).*

Few physicians live well.

*William Camden* (1551-1623).  
*Remains*, 322.

Most physicians as they grow  
Greater in skill grow less in their religion.  
*Philip Massinger* (1584-1640).  
*A Very Woman*.

Physicians are costly visitors.

*Clarke, J.*  
*Paroemiologia Anglo-Latina* (1639).

One says our art is much to be desired,  
Another says it is greatly to be feared.  
Our art arouses many murmurs,  
But it also prevents many from complaining.  
*De Cailly* (1604-1673).  
*Epigrams*.

### *A Left-handed Compliment*

They say it is an argument of a licentious common-wealth, where Phisitians and Lawyers have too great comminges in : but it is the surfeits of peace that bringeth in the Phisitians gaine ; yet in him there is some dispatch of businesse, for if he cannot speedily cure you he will yet quickly kill you . . .

*Barnabe Rich* (1540?-1617).  
*The Honestie of this Age*.

*A Scholar's Diatribe*

Consult a doctor if you must, either a physician or a surgeon. The art of the surgeon is the more certain, for what he does is definite and is seen by daylight. The physician, as he uneasily casts the urine and wrests from it a diagnosis, feels the pulse and examines the stools, deceives himself and his patient. But the risk is very different for each.

The wretched patient dies and dirges are sung by priests and hooded monks ; the doctor pockets a fee for his crime. He accuses Heaven and blames the Fates if the man dies, but he joyfully fills his purse with gold.

Alas ! if they effect a cure, it is by chance and not by skill.

Every other art is learnt in the practice of it, and never, or rarely, is a mistake made ; but hardly one per cent. of these practitioners of whom we speak, does not murder the man he seeks to heal.

Why is this ? It is because most of them do not know what they are doing or what medicine is. They learn dialectic and rely on philosophy, as chains to bind the ignorant public, but they hardly touch the very elements and groundwork of medicine. They come home full of tortuous circumlocutions and launch into argument ; they strut about swollen with pride and demand a public reward. They think they have done enough (and they are right) in being butchers of men under a respectable name . . .

Let them learn their art properly or cease to practise it. A mistake in other professions is tolerable, but this is full of danger if its practitioners are not perfect. It ravages like a hidden domestic plague.

Is it safe to trust to men whose science consists in the wearing of fine clothes and displaying rings and precious stones on unclean fingers ?

*Marcellus Palingenius (16th Century).*  
*Zodiacus Vitae, Leo, lib. V.*

### *Reasoned Criticism*

For in all times, in the opinion of the multitude, witches and old women and imposters have had a competition with physicians. And what followeth ? Even this, that physicians say to themselves, as Solomon expreseth it upon an higher occasion, ‘ If it befall to me as befalleth to the fools, why should I labour to be more wise ? ’ And therefore I cannot much blame physicians, that they use commonly to intend some other art or practice, which they fancy more than their profession. For you shall have of them antiquaries, poets, humanists, statesmen, merchants, divines, and in every of these better seen than in their profession ; and no doubt upon this ground, that they find that mediocrity and excellency in their art maketh no difference in profit or reputation towards their fortune ; for the weakness of patients, and sweetness of life, and nature of hope, maketh men depend upon physicians with all their defects.

Medicine is a science which hath been (as we have said) more professed than laboured, and yet more laboured than advanced ; the labour having been, in my judgment, rather in circle than in progression. For I find much iteration, but small addition.

In the inquiry of diseases, they do abandon the cures of many, some as in their nature incurable, and others as passed the period of cure ; so that Sylla and the Triumvirs never proscribed so many men to die, as they do by their ignorant edicts : whereof numbers do escape with less difficulty than they did in the Roman proscriptions. Therefore I will not doubt to note as a deficiency, that they inquire not the perfect cures of many diseases, or extremities of diseases ; but pronouncing them incurable do enact a law of neglect, and exempt ignorance from discredit.

Nay further, I esteem it the office of a physician not only to restore health, but to mitigate pain and dolors ; and not only when such mitigation may conduce to recovery, but when it may serve to make a fair and easy passage. For it is no small felicity which Augustus Cæsar was wont to wish to himself, that same *Euthanasia* ; and which was specially noted in the death of Antoninus Pius, whose death was after the fashion and semblance of a kindly and pleasant sleep. So it is written of Epicurus, that after his disease was judged desperate, he drowned his stomach and senses with a large draught and ingurgitation of wine ; whereupon the epigram was made, '*Hinc Stygias ebrius hausit aquas*' ; he was not sober enough to taste any bitterness of the Stygian water. But the physicians contrariwise do make a kind of scruple and religion to stay with the patient after the disease is deplored ; whereas in my judgment they ought both to enquire the skill, and to give the attendances, for the facilitating and assuaging of the pains and agonies of death.

They be the best physicians, which being learned incline to the traditions of experience, or being empirics incline to the methods of learning.

And although a man would think, by the daily visitations of the physicians, that there were a pursuance in the cure ; yet let a man look into their prescripts and ministrations, and he shall find them but inconstancies and every day's devices, without any settled providence or project. Not that every scrupulous or superstitious prescript is effectual, no more than every straight way is the way to heaven ; but the truth of direction must precede the severity of observance.

*Francis Bacon* (1561-1626).  
*Advancement of Learning* II.

### *On Choosing a Doctor*

Physicians are some of them so pleasing and conformable to the humour of the patient, as they press not the true cure of the disease ; and some others are so regular in proceeding according to art for the disease, as they respect not sufficiently the condition of the patient. Take one of a middle temper, or, if it may not be found in one man, combine two of either sort, and forget not to call as well the best acquainted with your body, as the best reputed for his faculty.

*Francis Bacon.*  
*Essays : Of Regimen of Health.*

*Ars Homicidiorum*

Physicians, I know (and none else) took up the bucklers in their defence, railing bitterly upon that venerable and princely custom of long lying-abed : yet, now I remember me I cannot blame them ; for they which want sleep (which is man's natural rest) become either mere *Naturals*, or else fall into the Doctor's hands, and so consequently into the Lord's : whereas he that snorts profoundly scorns to let Hippocrates himself stand tooting on his Urinal, and thereby saves that charge of a groats worth of *Physic* : And happy is that man that saves it ; for physick is *Non minus venefica quam benefica*, it hath an ounce of gall in it, for every dram of honey. Ten Tyburns cannot turn men over the perch so fast as one of these brewers of purgations : the very nerves of their practice being nothing but *Ars Homicidiorum*, an Art to make poor souls kick up their heels. Insomuch that even their sick grunting patients stand in more danger of M. Doctor and his drugs, than of all the Cannon shots which the desperate disease itself can discharge against them. Send them packing, therefore, to walk like *Italian Mountebanks*, beat not your brains to understand their parcel-Greek, parcel-Latin gibberish.

*Thomas Dekker* (1570 ?-1641 ?).

*The Guls Hornebooke.*

*Democritus Junior*

Of those diverse gifts which, our Apostle *Paul* saith, God hath bestowed on man, this of Physick is not

the least, but most necessary, and especially conducing to the good of mankind. Next therefore to God in all our extremities (*for of the Most High cometh healing, Ecclus. xxxviii. 2*), we must seek to, and rely upon the Physician who is *Manus Dei* [the Hand of God], saith *Hierophilus*, and to whom he hath given knowledge, that he might be glorified in his wondrous works. *With such doth he heal men, and taketh away their pains, Ecclus. xxxviii. 6, 7. When thou hast need of him, let him not go from thee. The hour may come that their enterprises may have good success, ver. [12], 13.* It is not therefore to be doubted that, if we seek a Physician as we ought, we may be eased of our infirmities, such a one I mean as is sufficient, and worthily so called; for there be many Mountebanks, Quacksalvers, Empiricks, in every street almost, and in every village, that take upon them this name, make this noble and profitable Art to be evil spoken of, and contemned, by reason of these base and illiterate Artificers: but such a Physician I speak of as is approved, learned, skilful, honest, &c.

*Robert Burton (1577-1640).*

*Anatomy of Melancholy, Part II, Sect. I, Memb. IV.*

### *A Chinese Poem*

#### *Lamenting the Practitioner*

Having nothing to do they take to healing. What do such people know about the value of human life? Or that saving people is not a business proposition? They only read half a medical book and learn the uses of a few drugs. Before starting practice they just inquire what medicine the popular quacks are



using and then try it on their patients. If some good results happen they are themselves surprised ; if death occurs they will say that the medicine is good but the disease is fatal. How many innocent boys and girls, young husbands and wives, aged fathers and mothers have you killed ? And people do not blame you, but on the contrary compensate you for the attendance and medicine ! Oh, how could you have the heart to do it ? Though the law cannot reach you yet heaven will not be deceived. Should you really want to serve suffering humanity you must first read more. If unable to do so, better change your profession so as to escape the fires of hell !

*Hsu Ling-tai (End of Ming Dynasty, 1368-1662).  
Trans. K. Chimin Wong.*

### *Epitaph on a Doctor*

Here lies one, who laid others low,  
A most learned doctor  
Of that art so fatal to the living.  
Say paternosters for him.  
Many through him have their inheritance.  
They and their heirs gladly say them.

He waged war on every age and sex,  
With his bleedings and poisoned draughts  
He is now with a multitude of the dead  
Dispatched by his means.

Health fled like a hare,  
In front of him she doubled the pace ;

Death was the only end  
 He put to a fever ;  
 Greater foe was he to quinine  
 Than Augustus to Cinna.

A true basilisk, he killed with a look,  
 And cut the threads of the best lives ;  
 He would not have spared his mule,  
 If the mule had been ill,  
 Or if he had not himself been struck down.

*Bensérade* (1613-1691).

### *Characters*

#### *A Meere Dull Physician*

His practice is some businesse at bed-sides, and his speculation an Vrinall. He is distinguisht from an Empericke by a round veluet cap, and Doctor's gowne, yet no man takes degrees more superfluously, for he is Doctor howsoever. He is sworn to *Galen* and *Hypocrates*, as Vniversity men to their statues, though they neuer saw them, and his discourse is all Aphorismes, though his reading be only *Alexis* of Piemont, or the Regiment of Health. The best Cure he has done is vpon his own purse, which from a lean sicklinesse he hath made lusty, and in flesh. His learning consists much in reckoning vp the hard names of diseases, and the superscriptions of Gallypots in his Apothecaries Shoppe, which are rank't in his Shelues, and the Doctors memory. He is indeed only languag'd in diseases and speaks Greeke many times when he knows not. If he haue been but a by-stander at some desperate recouery, he is slandered

with it, though he be guiltlesse ; and this breeds his reputation, and that his Practice ; for his skill is merely opinion. Of al odors he likes best the smel of Vrine and holds *Vespations* rule, that no gain is vnsauory. If you send this once to him, you must resolute to be sicke howsoever, for he will never leaue examining your Water till hee haue shaken it into a disease. Then follows a writ to his druggier in a strange tongue, which he vnderstands though he cannot conster. If he see you himselfe, his presence is the worst visitation ; for if he cannot heale your sicknes, he will bee sure to helpe it. Hee translates his Apothecaries Shop into your Chamber, and the very Windowes and benches must take Phisicke. He tells you your Maladie in Greeke, though it be but a cold, or head ach : which by good endeaour and diligence he may bring to some moment indeed ; his most vnfaithfull act is, that he leaues a man gasping, and his pretence is, death and he have a quarrell, and must not meet ; but his feare is, least the Carcassee should bleed. Anotomies and other spectacles of Mortalitie haue hardened him, and he is no more struck with a Funerall than a Grauemaker. Noblemen vse him for a director of their stomacks, and Ladies for wantonnesse, especially if hee bee a proper man. If he be single, he is in league with his Shee-Apothecary, and because it is the Physitian, the husband is Patient. If he haue leasure to be idle (that is to study) he has a smatch at Alcumy, and is sicke of the Philosophers stone, a disease vncurable, but by an abundant Phlebotomy of the purse. His two maine opposites are a Mountebanke and a good Woman, and he neuer shewes his learning so much as in an inuectiue against them, and their boxes. In

conclusion he is a sucking consumption, and a very brother to the wormes, for they are both ingendred out of man's corruption.

*John Earle* (1601 ?-1665).

*Micro-Cosmographie*, 4

### *The Good Physician*

1. *He trusteth not the single witnesse of the water if better testimony may be had.* For reasons drawn from the urine alone are as brittle as the urinall. Sometimes the water runneth in such post-haste through the sick man's body, it can give no account of anything memorable in the passage, though the most judicious eye examine it. Yea the sick man maybe in the state of death, and yet life appear in his state.

2. *Coming to his patient he persuades him to put his trust in God, the fountain of health.* The neglect hereof hath caused the bad successe of the best Physicians : for God will manifest that though skill come mediately from him to be gotten by mans pains, success comes from him immediately to be disposed at his pleasure.

3. *He hansells not his new experiments on the bodies of his patients ;* letting loose mad receipts into the sick mans body, to try how well Nature in him will fight against them, whilst himself stands by and sees the battel, except it be in desperate cases when death must be expell'd by death.

4. *To poore people he prescribes cheap but wholesome medicines :* not removing the consumption out of their bodies into their purses ; nor sending them to the East Indies for drugs, when they can reach better out of their gardens.

5. *Lest his Apothecary should oversee, he oversees his Apothecary.* For though many of that profession be both able and honest, yet some out of ignorance or haste may mistake : witness one of Bloys, who being to serve a Doctours bill, instead of *Optimi* (short written) read *Opii*, and had sent the patient asleep to his grave, if the Doctours watchfulnesse had not prevented him ; worse are those who make wilfull errorrs, giving one thing for another. A prodigall who had spent his estate was pleased to jeer himself, boasting that he had cosened those who had bought his means ; They gave me (said he) good new money, and I sold them my Great-great-grandfathers old land. But this cosenage is too too true in many Apothecaries, selling to sick folk for new money antiquated drugs, and making dying mens Physick of dead ingredients.

6. *He brings not news with a false spie that the coast is clear till death surprises the sick man.* I know Physicians love to make the best of their patients estate. First 'tis improper that *Adjutores vitæ* should be *Nuncii mortis*. Secondly, none, with their good will, will tell bad news. Thirdly, their fee may be the worse for't. Fourthly, 'tis a confessing that their art is conquer'd. Fifthly, it will poyson their patients heart with grief, and make it break before the time. However they may so order it, that the party may be inform'd of his dangerous condition, that he be not outed of this world before he be provided for another.

7. *When he can keep life no longer in, he makes a fair and easy passage for it to go out.* He giveth his attendance for the facilitating and asswaging of the pains and agonies of death. Yet generally 'tis death to a Physician to be with a dying man.

8. *Unworthy pretenders to Physick are rather foils than stains to the Profession.* Such a one was that counterfeit, who called himself *The Baron of Blackamore*, and feigned he was sent from the Emperour to our young King Henry the sixth, to be his principall Physician : but his forgery being discovered, he was apprehended, and executed in the Tower of London, *Anno* 1426, and such the world daily swarms with. Well did the Poets feigne Esculapius and Circe, brother and sister, and both children of the Sunne : for in all times in the opinion of the multitude, witches, old women, and impostours have had a competition with Physicians. And commonly the most ignorant are the most confident in their undertakings, and will not stick to tell you what disease the gall of a dove is good to cure. He took himself to be no mean Doctour, who being guilty of no Greek, and being demanded why it was called an *Hectick fever*, because (saith he) *of an hecking cough which ever attendeth that disease.*

*Thomas Fuller* (1608-1661).  
*The Holy State*, Bk. II, Ch. 2.

### *A Surgeon*

Is one that has some businesse about his Building or little house of man, whereof Nature is as it were the Tyler, and hee the Playsterer. It is ofter out of reparations then an old Parsonage, and then he is set on worke to patch it againe. Hee deales most with broken Commodities, as a broken Head, or a mangled face, and his gaines are very ill got, for he lives by the hurts of the Common-wealth. He differs

from a Physitian as a sore do's from a disease, or the sicke from those that are not whole, the one distempers you within, the other blisters you without. He complains of the decay of Valour in these daies, and sighes for that flashing Age of Sword and Buckler; and thinkes the Law against Duels, was made merely to wound his Vocation. Hee had beene long since vndone, if the charitie of the Stewes had not relieued him, from whom he ha's his Tribute as duely as the Pope, or a wind-fall sometimes from a Tauerne, if a quart Pot hit right. The rareness of his custom mak[e]s him pittillesse when it comes: and he holds a Patient longer than our Courts a Caufe. Hee tels you what danger you had beene in if he had staide but a minute longer, and though it bee but a prickt finger, hee makes of it much matter. He is a reasonable cleanly man, considering the Scabs hee ha's to deale with, and your finest Ladies now and then are beholding to him for their best dressings. He curses old Gentlewomen, and their charity that mak[e]s his Trade their Almes: but his enuie is neuer stir'd so much as when Gentlemen go ouer to fight vpon Calice Sands, whom hee wishes drown'd ere they come there, rather then the French shal get his Custome.

*John Earle (1601 ?-1665).  
Micro-Cosmographie, 42*

### *Chirurgery*

Necessary and ancient their profession, ever since man's body was subject to enmity and casualty. For, that promise, 'A bone of him shall not be

broken,' is peculiar to Christ. As for the other, 'To keep them in all their ways, that they dash not their foot against a stone,' though it be extended to all Christians, yet it admitteth (as other temporal promises) of many exceptions, according to God's will and pleasure.

It seemeth by the Parable of the good Samaritan, who 'bound up' the Passenger's wounds, 'pouring in oil and wine,' that, in that age, ordinary persons had a general insight in Chirurgery, for their own and others' use. And it is reported, to the just praise of the Scotch Nobility, that anciently they all were very dextrous thereat; particularly it is written of James the Fourth, King of Scotland, *quod vulnera scientissime tractaret*, 'he was most scilful at the handling of wounds.' But we speak of Chirurgery, as it is a particular mystery, professed by such as make a vocation thereof. Of whom we have inserted some (eminent for their writings or otherwise) amongst Physicians, and that (as we hope) without any offence, seeing the healing of diseases and wounds were anciently one calling (as still great the sympathy betwixt them; many diseases causing *wounds*, as *ulcers*; as *wounds* occasioning *diseases*, as *feavers*), till in process of time they were separated, and Chirurgions only consigned to the *manual operation*. Thus, wishing unto them the *three* requisities for their practise, an *Eagle's eye*, a *Lady's hand*, and a *Lion's heart*, I leave them, and proceed.

Thomas Fuller (1608-1661).  
*History of the Worthies of England, Vol. I, Ch. IX.*



*Questions of Conscience*

A physician may not leave a certain way and take an uncertain in the question of life or health. . . . It is hard that a physician should grow wiser at no cheaper rate than the deaths of many patients. . . . When a physician hath no better, he may take that course which is probable, for that is his best ; he cannot be required to more, and he is excused, because he is required to minister.

*Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667).*

*Of Conscience.*

*Ductor dubitantium, I.*

It is lawful to tell a lie to children or to madmen. . . . And so do physicians to their patients, abusing the fancies of hypochondriacal and disordered persons into a will of being cured. . . . and physicians can never apply their remedies unless they pretend warrants and compliances, and use little arts of wit and cozenage. This and the like were so usual, so permitted to physicians, that it grew to a proverb, *Mentiris ut medicus* ; which yet was always to be understood in the way of charity, and with honour to the profession. But this any physician may not do, that is, not to every patient : for if the man be wise and can choose and can consider, he may not be cozened into his cure by the telling of a lie, because he is capable of reason, and therefore may choose what he hath a mind to, and therefore to cozen him is to injure him. . . .

*Jeremy Taylor.*

*Of Human Laws.*

*Ductor dubitantium, II.*

*Pretty Sweeping*

. . . What the Feaver is to the Physicians, the eternal Reproach. . . .

*John Milton* (1608-1674).  
*The Reason of Church Government—Preface.*

Physicians, like beer, are best when they are old.  
*Thomas Fuller* (1608-1661).

Medicine may be defined as the art or the science of supporting a patient with frivolous reasons for his illness and amusing him with remedies good or bad until nature kills or cures.

*Ægidius Menagius* (1613-1692).  
*Menagiana.*

It is pitiful to hear Doctors uphold with bad arguments remedies which they apply, often with more luck than knowledge. Perhaps I should not be wrong if, in the good and cheerful company of doctors, I defined as impudence their practice of approving as true, ridiculous causes for an illness ; their temerity in ordering uncertain remedies as if they were infallible ; their vanity in drawing renown from fortunate successes and their dexterity in excusing unhappy events or false prognosis.

*Sorbière* (1615-1670).

Great and small, princes and peasants, we are all in subjection to these tyrants who are often at war

amongst themselves and make merchandize of our lives, which they value no more than the Spaniards value the Angolan negroes in the mines of Potosi. We are the instruments by which they amass their gold and silver—even after we are dead.

*Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz* (1646–1716).  
*Memorandum on Scientific Societies* (1670).  
*Œuvres*, VII, 92 (ed. Careil).

### *Stage Doctors*

#### L'AMOUR MEDICIN

#### (LOVE'S THE BEST DOCTOR)

#### Act II, Scene I.

#### *Sganarelle, Lisette.*

*Lis.*—What do you want with four doctors, Monsieur? Is not one enough to kill anybody?

*Sgan.*—Hold your tongue; four heads are better than one.

*Lis.*—Cannot your daughter die soon enough without the help of these gentlemen?

*Sgan.*—Do people die through employing doctors?

*Lis.*—Indeed they do; I knew a man who maintained—and he had excellent reasons—that one ought never to say ‘such a person died of a fever or from inflammation of the lungs,’ but ‘she died of four doctors and two chemists.’

. . . . .

## Scene III.

*Messieurs Des Fonandrès, Tomès,  
Macroton and Bahys (Doctors).*

(They sit down and cough.)

*M. Tom.*—But, by the bye, which side do you take in the dispute between the two physicians, Theophrastus and Artemius? The whole profession is divided over the matter.

*M. Des.*—I? I am for Artemius.

*M. Tom.*—So am I; although his advice, as we have seen, killed the patient, and that of Theophrastus was certainly much better; yet the latter was decidedly wrong, under the circumstances, and he ought not to have held an opinion different from that of his senior. What say you?

*M. Des.*—Unquestionably, etiquette should always be respected, no matter what happens.

*M. Tom.*—For my part, I am excessively strict in these matters, except between friends. The other day three of us were called in to a consultation with a provincial doctor, whereupon I stopped the whole affair; I would not allow the consultation to take place if things were not to be done in order. The people of the house did what they could and the sickness grew worse, but I would not give way and the patient died heroically during the dispute.

*M. Des.*—It is quite right to teach people how to behave and to show them their ignorance.

*M. Tom.*—A dead man is but a dead man and not of any consequence; but the whole medical profession suffers injury if one formality is neglected.

*Molière (1622-1673).*

*Trans. A. R. Waller (1902).*

LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE.

(THE IMAGINARY INVALID.)

Act III, Scene III.

*Argan, Béralde.*

*Argan.*—But let us reason together, brother ; don't you believe at all in medicine ?

*Béralde.*—No, brother ; and I do not see that it is necessary for our salvation to believe in it.

*Argan.*—What ! Do you not hold true a thing acknowledged by everybody, and revered throughout all ages ?

*Béralde.*—Between ourselves, far from thinking it true, I look upon it as one of the greatest follies which exist among men ; and to consider things from a philosophical point of view, I don't know of a more absurd piece of mumery, of anything more ridiculous, than a man who takes upon himself to cure another man.

*Argan.*—Why will you not believe that a man can cure another ?

*Béralde.*—For the simple reason, brother, that the springs of our machines are mysteries about which men are as yet completely in the dark, and nature has put too thick a veil before our eyes for us to know anything about it.

*Argan.*—Then, according to you, the doctors know nothing at all.

*Béralde.*—Oh yes, brother. Most of them have some knowledge of the best classics, can talk fine Latin, can give a Greek name to every disease, can define and distinguish them ; but as to curing these diseases, that's out of the question.

*Argan.*—Still, you must agree to this, that doctors know more than others.

*Béralde.*—They know, brother, what I have told you ; and that does not effect many cures. All the excellency of their art consists in pompous gibberish, in a specious babbling, which gives you words instead of reasons, and promises instead of results.

*Argan.*—Still, brother, there exist men as wise and clever as you, and we see that in cases of illness every one has recourse to the doctor.

*Béralde.*—It is a proof of human weakness, and not of the truth of their art.

*Argan.*—Still, doctors must believe in their art, since they make use of it for themselves.

*Béralde.*—It is because some of them share the popular error by which they themselves profit, while others profit by it without sharing it. Your Mr. Purgon has no wish to deceive ; he is a thorough doctor from head to foot, a man who believes in his rules more than in all the demonstrations of mathematics, and who would think it a crime to question them. He sees nothing obscure in physic, nothing doubtful, nothing difficult, and through an impetuous prepossession, an obstinate confidence, a coarse common sense and reason, orders right and left purgatives and bleedings, and hesitates at nothing. We must bear him no ill-will for the harm he does us ; it is with the best intentions in the world that he will send you into the next world, and in killing you he will do no more than he has done to his wife and children, and than he would do to himself if need be.

*Argan.*—It is because you have a spite against him. But let us come to the point. What is to be done when one is ill ?

*Béralde*.—Nothing, brother.

*Argan*.—Nothing ?

*Béralde*.—Nothing. Only rest. Nature, when we leave her free, will herself gently recover from the disorder into which she has fallen. It is our anxiety, our impatience, which does the mischief, and most men die of their remedies, and not of their diseases.

*Argan*.—Still, you must acknowledge, brother, that we can in certain things, help nature.

*Béralde*.—Alas, brother ; these are pure fancies, with which we deceive ourselves. At all times, there have crept among men brilliant fancies in which we believe, because they flatter us, and because it would be well if they were true. When a doctor speaks to us of assisting, succouring nature, of removing what is injurious to it, of giving it what it is defective in, of restoring it, and giving back to it the full exercise of its functions ; when he speaks of purifying the blood, or refreshing the bowels and the brain, of correcting the spleen, of rebuilding the lungs, of renovating the liver, of fortifying the heart, of re-establishing and keeping up the natural heat, and of possessing secrets wherewith to lengthen life of many years—he repeats to you the romance of physic. But when you test the truth of what he has promised to you, you will find that it all ends in nothing ; it is like those beautiful dreams which only leave you in the morning the regret of having believed in them.

*Argan*.—Which means that all the knowledge of the world is contained in your brain, and that you think you know more than all the great doctors of our age put together.

*Béralde*.—When you weigh words and actions,

your great doctors are two different kinds of people. Listen to their talk, they are the cleverest people in the world ; see them at work, and they are the most ignorant.

*Molière* (1622-1673).

*Trans. C. H. Wall* (1891).

*The Opinion of a King—*

The King [James I] laughs at medicine, and holds it so cheap that he declares physicians to be of very little use and hardly necessary. He asserts the art of medicine to be supported by mere conjectures, and useless because uncertain.

*Sir Theodore Mayerne* (1573-1655).

*Memoir on the health of James I.*

*Trans. Norman Moore.*

*—of a Dean—*

. . . Physitians contemplating Nature, and finding many abstruse things subject to the search of Reason, think therefore that all is so ; . . .

*‘ Why are Courtiers sooner Atheists than men of other conditions ? ’*

*Paradoxes & Problems, XVI.*

I observe the *Phisician* with the same diligence, as hee the *disease* ; I see hee *feares*, and I feare with him : I overtake him, I overrun him in his feare, and I go the faster, because he makes his pace slow ; I feare the more, because he disguises his feare, and I see



it with the more sharpnesse, because hee would not have me see it. He knowes that his *feare* shall not disorder the practise, and exercise of his *Art*, but he knows that my *feare* may disorder the effect, and working of his practise.

*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, VI.

But where there is room for *consultation*, things are not desperate. They (the physicians) *consult*; so there is nothing *rashly*, *inconsiderately* done; and then they *prescribe*, they *write*, so there is nothing *covertly*, *disguisedly*, *unavowedly* done. In *bodily diseases* it is not alwaies so; sometimes, as soon as the *Physicians* foote is in the *chamber*, his *knife* is in the patient's *arme*; the disease would not allow a *minutes* forbearing of *blood*, nor *prescribing* of other remedies.

*Devotion*, IX.

*John Donne* (1573-1631).

—of a *Philosopher*—

Physics, astronomy, medicine and all the sciences which depend on the consideration of composite matters are extremely doubtful and uncertain.

*Méditation*, I.

And it seems to me that anyone who has a modicum of sense, can discern for himself what is good for the health—provided that he will give it a little care—better indeed than the most learned doctors can teach him.

*Descartes* (1596-1650)

*Méditations Métaphisiques*.

## —and of a Statesman

An honest physician leaves his patient when he can no longer contribute to his health.

*William Temple* (1628–1699).

*A King's Physician is Frank*

In most Countreys, a Criminal who is to be put to the Rack, or any ways executed, is usually, from his suffering, called the *Patient*, or *Sufferer*; and so is the sick man, that is to subject himself to the rigid sentence of some of the combined Physicians which renders the word *Patient* or *Sufferer* truly synonymous to both.

It was named by his men of Physick, *the new Disease*: a name of ignorance, or their accustomed *Asylum ignorantiae*, to which they take their refuge, when they know not what the Disease is, or what to call it.

The consequence of mistakes in Diseases is so obvious, even to the most obtuse judgments, that it's received for a mathematical deduction. *If the Doctor hath mistaken my Distemper, I am a dead man, or in danger of being so.* And rather than the Doctor will espouse his errour in that point, or permit another (of more sense or experience) to be called in upon him, whereby his Reputation may in the least punctilio be shock'd, or his Fees abated, Thou, and a Thousand more, shall be posted away to the Subterranean Mansions, where all things shall be forgotten, and thy evidence against the said Physician

wholly cancell'd. Such is the Ignorance, Avarice, and Barbarian Perversity of some Physicians, whom Authority and Law do shelter from all manner of Accusations, Scandal, or Reproach.

Now, upon application of this Discourse to two or three hundred Physitians, you shall scarce find six, that can justly pretend to the Title of a good Physitian, or whose Education doth hardly qualify them to be rendered such.

How few good Surgeons there are to be found, may easily be judged by what is premised ; yet it is very probable, there are more in *England*, than elsewhere.

I am not only of opinion, but possibly certain, that notwithstanding all the delusions of Anatomy, great Scholarship, wonderful parts, Vaunting and Boasting, the seat and causes of most Diseases are unknown and mistaken by the Commonalty of Physicians.

*Gideon Harvey* (1640?–1700?).

*(Physician to Charles II.)*

*The Conclave of Physicians.*

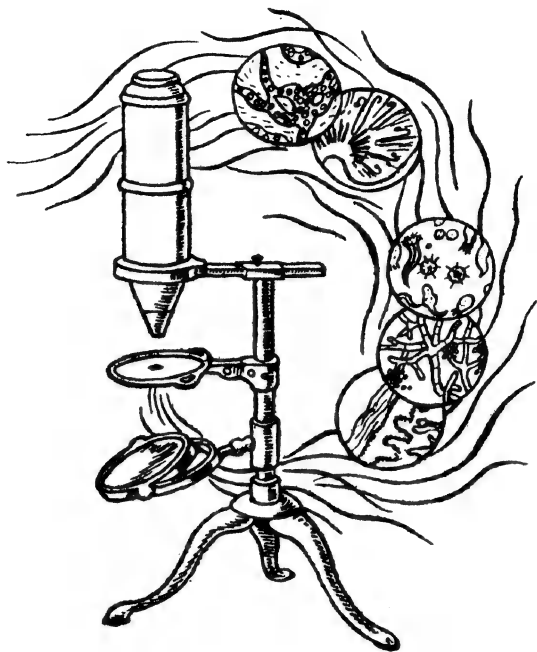
I, 5, 6, 7 ; III, 2 and VII, ii.

### *The Old Libel*

Physicians kill more than ever they can cure.

*Ned Ward* (1667–1731).

*The World Bewitched* (1699).



## V. THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Whatever is good in medicine is to be found not in palaces nor among the great, but more often in the small, unhealthy dwellings of the poor. There man can help man, alone and without witnesses; there certainly are to be found tears to dry and woes to comfort. To the praise of doctors be it said that no other citizens fulfil these splendid duties with so much zeal and courage.

*Félix Vicq-d'Azyr (1748-1794).  
Eloge de Fothergill.*

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The eighteenth century was the age of 'reason' when all established beliefs and customs were subjected to criticism from which the medical profession did not escape. Nor can it be denied that criticism was often deserved. The profession at this time was divided into three classes—physicians, surgeons and apothecaries. Of these, the physicians and surgeons were for the most part well educated and, indeed, often learned men, but their practice left much to be desired, for in spite of the progress of the seventeenth century, medicine almost stood still for more than two generations, and even up to the end of the eighteenth bleeding, blistering, purging and polypharmacy were the chief weapons in the physicians' armoury. Their manners also were open to attack, for it was an age of medical pomposity and pedantry, of full-bottomed wigs, snuff-boxes and gold-headed canes. Voltaire's witticisms were not without point when he defined a physician as 'one who pours drugs of which he knows little into a body of which he knows less,' and when he said that 'the art of war is like that of medicine, murderous and conjectural.'

But although the wits of the century were usually very sceptical about regular medicine they were often strangely credulous where quacks were concerned. Indeed the eighteenth century, critical though it was, has been described as the golden age of quackery, for Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, herself a typical product of the period, was probably right when she said that 'there is a fund of credulity in mankind that must be employed somewhere.'

*Verses*

See, one physician, like a sculler, plies,  
The patient lingers and by inches dies,  
But two physicians, like a pair of oars  
Waft him more swiftly to the Stygian shores.

*Attributed to Samuel Garth (1661-1719).*

*Also to John Dunscomb (1730-1786).*

*Or Joseph Jekyll (1752-1837).*

You tell your doctor, that y'are ill ;  
And what does he, but write a bill,  
Of which you need not read one letter :  
The worse the scrawl, the dose the better.  
For if you knew but what you take,  
Though you recover he must break.

*Matthew Prior (1664-1721).*

*Alma, Canto III, 97.*

The soldier may often be charg'd on the plain-  
None live to encounter the doctor again.

*Latin epigram by Thomas More  
(d. 1735) on 'Nicolaus.'*

*Trans. H. P. Dodd (1870).*

The doctors, tender of their fame,  
Wisely on me lay all the blame :  
' We must confess his case was nice,  
But he would never take advice.'

*Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).*

' Is there no hope ? ' the sick man said,  
The silent doctor shook his head,

( III )

And took his leave with signs of sorrow,  
Despairing of his fee to-morrow.

*John Gay (1685-1732).  
The Sick Man and the Angel.*

God and the Doctor we alike adore,  
But only when in danger, not before ;  
The danger o'er, both are alike requited,  
God is forgotten, and the doctor slighted.

*Alexander Pope (1688-1744).  
Quoted by Jeaffreson in  
A Book about Doctors.*

For great the man, and useful without doubt,  
Who seasons pottage, or expels the gout ;  
Whose science keeps life in, and keeps death out.

*Walter Harte (1709-1774).*

The parson shows the way to heaven,  
And then with tender care  
The doctor consummates the work  
And sends the patient there.

*Joseph Jekyll (1752-1837).*

*Praise from Cynics*

They (physicians) are in general the most amiable  
companions and the best friends, as well as the most  
learned men I know.

*Alexander Pope (1688-1744).  
Letter to his friend Allen.*



Removed from kind Arbuthnot's aid,  
Who knows his art but not his trade,  
Preferring his regard for me  
Before his credit or his fee.

*Jonathan Swift* (1667-1745).  
*In Sickness.*

Nothing is more estimable than a physician who, having studied nature from his youth, knows the properties of the human body, the diseases which assail it, the remedies that will benefit it, exercises his art with caution, and pays equal attention to the rich and the poor.

*Voltaire* (1694-1778).  
*A Philosophical Dictionary, Physician.*  
*Trans. J. K. Hoyt.*

### *Opinions of Wits*

I am patriot enough to take pains to bring this useful invention (inoculation) into fashion in England; and I should not fail to write to some of our doctors very particularly about it, if I knew anyone of them that I thought had virtue enough to destroy such a considerable branch of their revenue for the good of mankind. But that distemper is too beneficial to them not to expose to all their resentment the hardy wight that should undertake to put an end to it.

*April 1st, 1717.*

When I recollect the vast fortunes raised by doctors amongst us, and the eager pursuit after every new piece of quackery that is introduced, I cannot help thinking there is a fund of credulity in mankind that must be employed somewhere, and the money formerly given to monks for the health of the soul, is now thrown to doctors for health of the body, and generally with as little real prospect of success.

*March 6th, 1749.*

I hope you will no more suffer the physicians to try experiments with so good a constitution as yours.

*November 12th, 1757.*

*Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762).*

*Letters.*

Physicians ought not to give their judgment of religion, for the same reason that butchers are not admitted to be jurors upon life and death.

Apollo was held the god of physic and sender of diseases. Both were originally the same trade, and still continue.

*Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).*

*Thoughts on Various Subjects (Oct., 1706).*

Physicians, though they commit more deaths than soldiers, never are tried . . . but as they choose, I suppose, to seem to deliberate, as physicians do who retire to consult in another room and there talk news.

By quack I mean impostor not in opposition to,  
but in common with physicians.

The Jesuits are fallen but the time is not yet come  
for rooting out our physicians.

In physicians I believe no more than in Divines.

*Horace Walpole (1717-1797).  
Letters.*

As you are living with a doctor it is not surprising  
that you are ill.

*Voltaire (1694-1778).  
Letter to a Friend (1760).*

I know nothing more laughable than a doctor who  
does not die of old age.

*Letter (Nov. 6, 1767).*

A physician is one who pours drugs of which he  
knows little into a body of which he knows less.

The art of war is like that of medicine, murderous  
and conjectural.

*Attributed to Voltaire,  
In The Cynic's Breviary,  
by J. Raymond Solly.*

*Worldly Wisdom*

No man values the best medicine if administered by a physician whose person he hates or despises.

*Jonathan Swift* (1667-1745).

For it is better to have to do with the populace than with persons of fashion: happy is the suburb physician! His faults are less observed and his assassinations less known.

*Le Sage* (1668-1747).

*Gil Blas*, Bk. II, Ch. III.

*Trans. Tobias Smollett* (1721-1771).

A sickly, infirm look is as disadvantageous to a physician as that of a rake in a clergyman, or a sheepish look in a soldier.

*Samuel Croxall* (1680-1752).

*Archdeacon of Salop.*

*In a Word*

The physician, who is no risible animal . . .

*Le Sage* (1668-1747).

*Gil Blas*, Bk. II, Ch. III.

*Trans. Tobias Smollett* (1721-1771).

I abhor physicians.

*Horace Walpole* (1717-1797).

*Letter, Dec. 20, 1762.*

A doctor is a man who writes prescriptions till the patient either dies or is cured by nature.

*John Taylor (1680-1761).*

*The Great Moralist Speaks*

Life is not to be sacrificed either to an affectation of quick discernment or of crowded practice, but may be required, if trifled away, at the hand of the physician.

*Life of Boerhaave.*

How many men in a year die through the timidity of those they consult for health !

Never think it clever to call physic a mean study.

I believe every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusion of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art, where there is no hope of lucre.

*Life of Garth.*

They (doctors) do more good to mankind without a prospect of reward than any profession of men whatever.

*Life of Akenside.*

[Medicine] . . . must, undoubtedly, claim the second place amongst those which are of the greatest benefit to mankind.

*Life of Boerhaave.*

A physician in a great city seems to be the mere plaything of fortune ; his degree of reputation is, for the most part, totally casual ; they that employ him know not his excellence ; they that reject him know not his deficiency. By any acute observer who had looked on the transactions of the medical world for half a century, a very curious book might be written on the fortune of physicians.

*Life of Akenside.*

*Samuel Johnson (1709-1784).*

### *Essayists and Novelists*

There is not a more useful man in a commonwealth than a good physician : and by consequence no worthier a person than he uses his skill with generosity even to persons of condition, and compassion to those in want : which is the behaviour of Hippocrates, who shows as much liberality in his practice, as he does wit in his conversation, and skill in his profession. A wealthy doctor, who can help a poor man, and will not, without a fee, has less sense of humanity than a poor ruffian, who kills a rich man to supply his necessities. It is something monstrous, to consider a man of liberal education tearing out the bowels of a poor family, by taking for a visit what would keep them a week. Hippocrates needs not the comparison of such extortion to set off his generosity ; but I mention his generosity to add shame to such extortion.

*Tatler (No. 78, Oct. 8, 1709).*

If . . . we look into the profession of physic, we shall find a most formidable body of men. The sight of them is enough to make a man serious, for we may lay it down as a maxim, that when a nation abounds in physicians, it grows thin of people.

*Joseph Addison* (1672-1719).  
*Spectator* (No. 21, March 24, 1710-11).

Every physician almost, hath his favourite disease.

*Henry Fielding* (1707-1754).  
*Tom Jones*, Bk. II, Ch. 9.

Doctors are always working to preserve our health and cooks to destroy it, but the latter are the more often successful.

*Diderot* (1713-1784).  
*Quoted in The Cynic's Breviary*.

### *Two Portraits—a Contrast*

#### *I. Levet—(died 1782).*

Condemn'd to Hope's delusive mine,  
As on we toil from day to day,  
By sudden blast or slow decline  
Our social comforts drop away.

Well try'd through many a varying year,  
See Levett to the grave descend;  
Officious, innocent, sincere,  
Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,  
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind,  
Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny  
Thy praise to merit unrefin'd.

When fainting Nature call'd for aid,  
And hov'ring death prepar'd the blow,  
His vigorous remedy display'd  
The power of art without the show.

In Misery's darkest caverns known,  
His ready help was ever nigh,  
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,  
And lonely Want retir'd to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay,  
No petty gains disdain'd by pride ;  
The modest wants of every day  
The toil of every day supply'd.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,  
Nor made a pause, nor left a void ;  
And sure the eternal Master found  
His single talent well employ'd.

The busy day, the peaceful night,  
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by ;  
His frame was firm, his powers were bright,  
Though now his eightieth year was nigh.

Then, with no throbs of fiery pain,  
No cold gradations of decay,  
Death broke at once the vital chain,  
And freed his soul the nearest way.

*Samuel Johnson* (1709-1784).



II. *A Parish Doctor*

Anon, a figure enters, quaintly neat,  
 All pride and business, bustle and conceit ;  
 With looks unalter'd by these scenes of woe,  
 With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go,  
 He bids the gazing throng around him fly,  
 And carries fate and physic in his eye :  
 A potent quack, long versed in human ills,  
 Who first insults the victim whom he kills ;  
 Whose murd'rous hand a drowsy bench protect,  
 And whose most tender mercy is neglect.

Paid by the parish for attendance here,  
 He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer ;  
 In haste he seeks the bed where misery lies,  
 Impatience mark'd in his averted eyes ;  
 And, some habitual queries hurried o'er,  
 Without reply, he rushes on the door :  
 His drooping patient, long inured to pain,  
 And long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain ;  
 He ceases now the feeble help to crave  
 Of man ; and silent sinks into the grave.

*George Crabbe (1754-1832).  
 The Village, I (1783).*

*A Physician on his Profession*

Our faculty have often been reproached with hardness of heart, occasioned, as is supposed, by their being so much conversant with human misery. I hope and believe the charge is unjust. Habit may beget a command of temper, and a seeming composure which is often mistaken for insensibility. When this insensibility is real, it is a great loss to a physician,

as it deprives him of one of the most natural and powerful incitements to exert himself for the relief of his patient. On the other hand, a physician of too delicate sensibility is often rendered incapable of doing his duty by anxiety and excess of sympathy, which cloud his understanding, depress his spirit, and prevent him from acting with that steadiness and vigour, upon which perhaps the life of his patient in a great measure depends.

We sometimes see a very remarkable difference between the behaviour of a physician at his first setting out in life, and afterwards when he is fully established in reputation and practice. When beginning the world he is affable, polite, humane, and assiduously attentive to his patients ; but when in process of time he has reaped the fruits of such a behaviour, and finds himself above the world, and independent, he assumes a very different tone ; he becomes haughty, rapacious, careless, and sometimes perfectly brutal in his manners. Conscious of the ascendancy he has acquired, he acts the part of a despotic tyrant, and insolently boasts, that no man, in the place where he resides, dare die without his leave. He not only takes a most ungenerous advantage of the confidence which people have in his abilities, but lives upon the effects of his former reputation, when all confidence in his abilities has ceased : because a physician who has once arrived at a very extensive practice, continues to be employed by many people for their friends, who think of him themselves with contempt ; they employ him because it is fashionable to do so, and because they are afraid, if they neglected it, their own characters might suffer in the world.

A physician sometimes sees he is wrong, but is too proud, or rather too vain, to acknowledge his error, especially if the error is pointed out to him by another. To this species of pride, a pride incompatible with true dignity and elevation of mind, have the lives of thousands been sacrificed.

Much wit has indeed, in all ages, been exerted upon our profession ; but if we attend to it, this ridicule has rather been employed against physicians than physick. There are some reasons for this sufficiently obvious. Physicians, considered as a body of men, who live by medicine as a profession, have an interest separate and distinct from that of their art. In pursuit of this interest, some have acted with candour, with honour, with the ingenuous and liberal manners of gentlemen. Conscious of their own worth, they disdained all artificial colourings, and depended for success on their real merit. But such men are not the most numerous in any profession. Some impelled by necessity, some stimulated by vanity, and others anxious to conceal conscious ignorance, have had recourse to various mean and unworthy arts to raise their importance among the ignorant, who are always the most numerous part of mankind. Some of these arts have been an affectation of mystery in all their writings and conversations relating to their profession ; an affectation of profound knowledge, inscrutable to all, except the adepts in the science ; an air of perfect confidence in their own skill and abilities ; and a demeanour solemn, stately, and highly expressive of self-importance. These arts, however well they might succeed with the rest of mankind, could not escape the observation of the more judicious,

nor elude the ridicule of men of wit and humour. Accordingly it has been pointed against them with so much keenness, that we never meet with a physician in a dramattick representation, but he is treated as a solemn coxcomb and a fool. But it is very evident, that all this satire is levelled against the particular manners of individuals, and not against the profession of medicine itself.

*John Gregory (1724-1773).  
Duties of a Physician.*

### *A Venetian Adventurer*

My vocation was to study medicine, and to practise it, for I felt a great inclination for that profession, but no heed was given to my wishes, and I was compelled to apply myself to the study of the law, for which I had an invincible repugnance. My friends were of the opinion that I could not make my fortune in any profession but that of an advocate, and, what is still worse, of an ecclesiastical advocate. If they had given the matter proper consideration, they would have given me leave to follow my own inclinations, and I would have been a physician—a profession in which quackery is still of greater avail than in the legal business. I never became either a physician or an advocate, and I never would apply to a lawyer, when I had any legal business, nor call in a physician when I happened to be ill. Lawsuits and pettifoggery may support a good many families, but a greater proportion is ruined by them, and those who perish in the hands of physicians are more numerous by far than those who get cured—strong evidence, in my

opinion, that mankind would be much less miserable without either lawyers or doctors.

*Casanova* (1725-1798).  
*My Life and Adventures, Ch. III.*  
*Trans. Arthur Machen.*

### *Sarcasms*

Wonderful is the skill of the physician ; for a rich man he prescribeth various admixtures and compounds, by which the patient is brought to health in many days at an expense of fifty pounds ; while for a poor man for the same disease he giveth a more common name, and prescribeth a dose of oil, which worketh a cure in a single night, charging fourpence therefor.

*James Townley* (1714-1778).

The surest road to health, say what they will,  
Is never to suppose we shall be ill ;  
Most of those evils we poor mortals know  
From doctors and imagination flow.

*Charles Churchill* (1731-1764).  
*Night, I, 69.*

That boldness in medical practice is more frequently the antecedent than the consequence of experience, is a melancholy truth ; for it is generally founded either on theoretical dogmas, or on pride which disclaims authority.

*Thomas Perceval* (1740-1804).  
*Medical Ethics* (1803).  
*Note 1.*

*Praise for Learning—*

The medical profession, beyond all others, has remarkably deserved the character of general and extensive knowledge.

*William Blackstone* (1723–1780).  
*Commentaries* I, 14.

Whilst I allow, that peculiar and important advantages arise from the appropriate studies of the three learned professions, I must confess, that in erudition, in science, and in habits of deep and comprehensive thinking, the pre-eminence must be assigned, in some degree, to physicians.

The most desirable profession is that of medicine ; the practice of the law spoils a man's moral sense and philosophic spirit ; the Church is too bigoted and stiff-starched ; but the study and practice of physic are equally favourable to a man's moral sentiments and intellectual faculties.

*Samuel Parr* (1747–1825).

*—and for Generosity—*

When I consider the assiduity of this profession, their benevolence amazes me. They not only, in general, give their medicines for half value, but use the most persuasive remonstrances to induce the sick to come and be cured.

*Oliver Goldsmith* (1730–1774).  
*Essays*, No. XX.

—and for Friendship

There is no Friend like a Physician.

*Hesther Lynch Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale).*  
*Letter to Hestha Maria Thrale (1784).*

I used to wonder why people should be so fond of the company of their physician, till I recollected that he is the only person with whom one dares to talk continually of oneself, without interruption, contradiction or censure.

*Mrs. Hannah More (1745-1833).*

*Limitations*

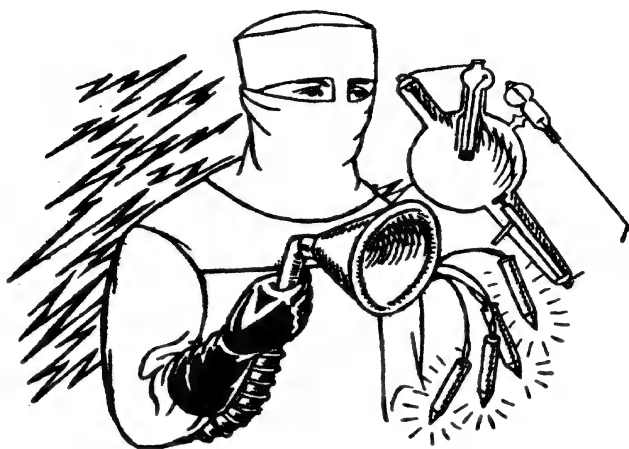
A physician can sometimes parry the scythe of death, but has no power over the sand in the hour glass.

*Hesther Lynch Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale) (1741-1821).*  
*Letter to Fanny Burney (1781).*  
*The Queeny Letters.*

*The End of the Century*

No men despise physic so much as physicians, because no men so thoroughly understand how little it can perform ; they have been tinkering the human constitution four thousand years, in order to cure about as many disorders ; . . . it is true that each disorder has a thousand prescriptions, but not a single remedy.

*Charles Caleb Colton (1780-1832).*



## VI. THE MODERNS



There is no process which can reckon up the amount of good which the science and art of medicine have conferred upon the human race ; there is no moral calculus that can grasp and comprehend the sum of their beneficent operations. Ever since the first dawn of civilization and learning, through

‘ The dark backward, and abysm of time,’

they have been the true and constant friends of the suffering sons and daughters of men. Through their ministers and disciples, they have cheered the desponding ; they have lightened the load of human sorrow ; they have dispelled or diminished the gloom of the sick-chamber ; they have plucked from the pillow of pain its thorns, and made the hard couch soft with the poppies of delicious rest ; they have let in the light of joy upon dark and desolate dwellings ; they have rekindled the lamp of hope in the bosom of despair ; they have called back the radiance of the lustreless eye and the bloom of the fading cheek ; they have sent new vigour through the failing limbs ; and finally, when exhausted in all their other resources, and baffled in their skill—handmaids of philosophy and religion—they have blunted the arrows of death, and rendered less rugged and precipitous the inevitable pathway to the tomb. In the circle of human duties, I do not know of any, short of heroic and perilous daring, or religious martyrdom and self-sacrifice, higher and nobler than those of the physician. His daily round of labour is crowded with beneficence, and his nightly sleep is broken, that others may have better rest. His whole life is a blessed ministry of consolation and hope.

*Elisha Bartlett.*

*Quoted by William Osler in Counsels and Ideals.*

## THE MODERNS

Modern comments upon doctors would probably fill a large volume, but the final section of this Anthology contains only a few extracts from English literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, culled almost at random.

From the middle of the 19th century down to the present day the progress of medicine has been so remarkable and its benefits to the community so conspicuous that many of the old gibes at doctors have lost their point and are only repeated, if at all, in jest. Blame, however, is still common enough, and all the old accusations recur in places except that of ignorance, which now gives place to the pretension that medicine is neither a science nor an art.

Praise, on the other hand, is more generously bestowed than in earlier periods, but curiously enough in an age of advancing technique and scientific discovery, it is not the doctor's professional skill that receives commendation, but his kindness, his generosity and the comfort he brings to the sick man and his relatives.

### *Napoleon's View*

Medicine is a collection of uncertain prescriptions, the results of which, taken collectively, are more fatal than useful to mankind.

*Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821).*

*Remark to Dr. Antonio Marchi at St. Helena.*

*Pithy Comments*

The nearer a man approaches to the gravity of a brute, the more he is accomplished as a physician.

*James Atkinson* (1759-1839).

But when ill, indeed,  
E'en dismissing the doctor don't always succeed.

*George Colman (Junnr.)* (1762-1836).

*Lodgings for Single Gentlemen.*

After thirty years' practice, I am fully convinced that two-thirds of all my patients would have recovered without the use of physic, or the attendance of a physician.

*Dr. Christolph Wilhelm Hufeland* (1762-1836).

*German Physician.*

He is the best physician who is the best inspirer of hope.

*S. T. Coleridge* (1772-1734).

Nothing exposed the Jews to more odium in ages when they were held most odious, than the reputation which they possessed as physicians.

*Robert Southey* (1774-1843).

### *Opinions of the Clergy*

The Sixth Commandment is suspended by one medical diploma, from the North of England to the South.

### *Medical Courage*

The boldness and enterprise of medical men is quite as striking as the courage displayed in battle, and evinces how much the power of encountering danger depends upon habit. Many a military veteran would tremble to feed upon *pus* ; to sleep in sheets running with water ; or to draw up the breath of feverish patients. . . . The bravery of our naval officers never produced anything superior to the therapeutic heroism of the Doctors.

### *Fashionable Physicians*

There is always some man, of whom the human viscera stand in greater dread than of any other person, who is supposed, for the time being, to be the only person who can dart his pill into their inmost recesses ; and bind them over, in medical recognisance, to assimilate and digest.

*Sydney Smith* (1771-1845).

*The Wit and Wisdom of the Rev. Sydney Smith* (1886).

There have been Physicians, the disgrace of their profession, who seem to have considered themselves,

in studying Medicine, as studying not a liberal science, but a mere art for the acquisition of money ; and have thence been solicitous to acquire an insight rather into the humours than into the diseases of mankind.

It is frequently of much importance, not to the comfort only, but to the recovery of the patient, that he should be enabled to look upon his Physician as his friend.

A Physician ought to be extremely watchful against covetousness ; for it is a vice imputed, justly or unjustly, to his Profession.

*Thomas Gisborne (1758-1846).  
The Duties of Physicians.*

### *Poets and Men of Letters*

It is so hard that one cannot really have confidence in doctors and yet cannot do without them.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832).  
Quoted by Josef Loebel in 'Whither Medicine.'  
Trans. Marie Sieveking and Ian Morrow.*

### *Professions—Physic*

Next, to a graver tribe we turn our view,  
And yield the praise to worth and science due ;  
But this with serious words and sober style,  
For these are friends with whom we seldom smile ;  
Helpers of men they're call'd, and we confess  
Theirs the deep study, theirs the lucky guess ;

We own that numbers join with care and skill,  
 A temperate judgment, a devoted will :  
 Men who suppress their feelings, but who feel  
 The painful symptoms they delight to heal ;  
 Patient in all their trials, they sustain  
 The starts of passion, the reproach of pain ;  
 With hearts affected, but with looks serene,  
 Intent they wait through all the solemn scene ;  
 Glad if a hope should rise from nature's strife,  
 To aid their skill and save the lingering life ;  
 But this must virtue's generous effort be,  
 And spring from nobler motives than a fee :  
 To the Physician of the Soul, and these,  
 Turn the distress'd for safety, hope and ease.

But as physicians of that nobler kind  
 Have their warm zealots, and their sectaries blind ;  
 So among these for knowledge most renown'd,  
 Are dreamers strange, and stubborn bigots found ;  
 Some, too, admitted to this honour'd name,  
 Have, without learning, found a way to fame ;  
 And some by learning—young physicians write,  
 To set their merit in the fairest light :  
 With them a treatise is a bait that draws  
 Approving voices—'tis to gain applause,  
 And to exalt them in the public view,  
 More than a life of worthy toil could do.  
 When 'tis proposed to make the man renown'd,  
 In every age convenient doubts abound ;  
 Convenient themes in every period start,  
 Which he may treat with all the pomp of art ;  
 Curious conjectures he may always make,  
 And either side of dubious questions take ;  
 He may a system broach, or, if he please,  
 Start new opinions on an old disease :

Or may some simple in the woodland trace,  
 And be its patron till it runs its race ;  
 As rustic damsels from their woods are won,  
 And live in splendour till their race be run ;  
 It weighs not much on what their powers be shown,  
 When all his purpose is to make them known.

To show the world what long experience gains,  
 Requires not courage, though it calls for pains ;  
 But at life's outset to inform mankind  
 Is a bold effort of a valiant mind.

The great, good man, for noblest cause displays  
 What many labours taught, and many days ;  
 These sound instruction from experience give,  
 The others show us how they mean to live ;  
 That they have genius, and they hope mankind  
 Will to its efforts be no longer blind.

There are, beside, whom powerful friends advance,  
 Whom fashion favours, person, patrons, chance :  
 And merit sighs to see a fortune made  
 By daring rashness, or by dull parade.

*George Crabbe (1754-1832).  
 The Borough, vii (1810).*

Nevertheless that the practice of Physic, and still more of surgery, should have an effect like that of war upon the persons engaged in it, is what those who are well acquainted with human nature might expect, and would be at no loss to account for. It is apparent that in all these professions coarse minds must be rendered coarser, and hard hearts still further indurated ; and that there is a large majority of such minds and hearts in every profession, trade and calling,

few who have had any experience of the world can doubt. . . .

But other causes may be found in the history of the medical profession, which was an art, in the worst sense of the word, before it became a science, and long after it pretended to be a science, was little better than a craft. Among savages the sorcerer is always the physician; and to this day superstitious remedies are in common use among the ignorant in all countries. But wherever the practice is connected with superstition as free scope is presented to wickedness as to imagination, and there have been times in which it became obnoxious to much obloquy, which on this score was well deserved.

*Robert Southey (1774-1843).*  
*The Doctor, Ch. CXX.*

This is the way physicians mend or end us,  
Secundum artem: but although we sneer  
In health—when ill, we call them to attend us,  
Without the least propensity to jeer.

*Byron (1788-1824).*  
*Don Juan, x, 42*

North: Doctors are generally dull dogs; and nobody in tolerable health and spirits wishes to hear anything about them and their quackeries.

Tickler: Their faces are indeed at all times most absurd; but more especially so when they are listening to your account of yourself, and preparing to pre-



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scribe for your inside, of which the chance is that they know no more than of the interior of Africa.

*John Wilson (Christopher North)*

(1785-1854).

*Noctes Ambrosianæ.*

### *An American*

In the early history of our race, we read of neither lawyers nor doctors, a strong hint that none were needed then ; if the number of the former was now reduced three-fourths, and that of the other one-half, and the young flood damned up for ten years, it would greatly increase individual happiness and prosperity of our country.

*L. Carroll Judson (1796-1847).*

### *Clinical Sense*

. . . There are certain inward gifts, more akin to genius than to talent—to intuition than to ratiocination—which make the physician prosper, and deserve to prosper. Medicine is not, like practical geometry, or the doctrine of projectiles, an application of an abstract, demonstrable science, in which a certain result may be drawn from certain data, or in which the disturbing forces can be calculated with an approximation to exactness. It is a tentative art, to succeed in which demands a quickness of eye, tact, thought, and invention, which are not to be learned by study, nor, without a connatural

aptitude, to be acquired by experience. And it is the possession of this *sense*, exercised by patient observation, and fortified with a just reliance on the *vis medicatrix*, the self-adjusting tendency of nature, that constitutes the physician, as imagination constitutes the poet, and brings it to pass, that sometimes an old apothecary, not very far removed from an *old woman*, whose ordinary conversation partakes largely of the character of twaddle, who can seldom give any rational account of a case or prescription, acquires a reputation of infallibility, as if he had made a truce with death—while men of talent and erudition are admired and neglected. The truth is, that there is a good deal of the mysterious in whatever is practical.

### *Types of Doctor*

The medical profession, in respect of the spirit in which they pursue their occupation, may be divided into four classes, corresponding to four classes of clerical teachers : 1st, Those who have been put into the profession, or chosen it at random, because they must be something—loungers who feel their business a toil and a constraint, who at best only desire to escape disgrace and make a living—correlative to the gentlemen in orders, and the drudging curates—a very unprofitable race when gentlemen, a very unhappy and mischievous one when otherwise. 2nd, Those who pursue their trade eagerly and diligently for money or advancement—correspondent to the preferment hunters of the Church, and the popular preachers and *Tartuffes* of all denominations, who will generally be respectable or otherwise, as their rank or

connections give them more or less of character to lose. 3rd, The votaries of science, to whom knowledge is an ultimate object, and practice chiefly valued as the means of increasing and certifying knowledge—correspondent to the speculative theologians—the students of religious learning—a class highly estimable and necessary, who answer their vocation well, and dignify their rank, whatever it may be : and 4th, The philanthropists, to whom knowledge is only a secondary object, valued as it is the means of abating pain and preserving life—correlative to those Christian teachers and pastors who are animated with the true and faithful love of souls. Among these, it is delightful to find men of all ranks—but rank with them is nothing : these are illuminated with a light, in which there may be many colours, but there is no darkness.

*Hartley Coleridge (1796–1849).*

*Life of Dr. John Fothergill in 'Northern Worthies.'*

### *Why doesn't the Doctor Tell?*

It is somewhat strange, that a class of men who can command such interesting, extensive, and instructive materials, as the experience of most members of the medical profession teems with, should have hitherto made so few contributions to the stock of polite and popular literature. The Bar, the Church, the Army, the Navy, and the Stage, have all of them spread the volumes of their secret history before the prying gaze of the public ; while that of the Medical Profession has remained hitherto, with scarcely an exception, a sealed book. And yet there are no members of

society whose pursuits lead them to listen more frequently to what has been exquisitely termed,

The still, sad music of humanity.

*Samuel Warren* (1807-1877).

*Introduction to The Diary of a Late Physician.*

### *The Friend of Rab*

It is the lot of the successful medical practitioner, who is more occupied with discerning diseases and curing them, than with discoursing about their essence, and arranging them into systems, who observes and reflects in order to act rather than to speak,—it is the lot of such men to be invaluable when alive, and to be forgotten soon after they are dead; and this not altogether or chiefly from any special ingratitude or injustice on the part of mankind, but from the very nature of the case. Much that made such a man what the community to their highest profit found him to be, dies, must die with him. His inborn gifts, and much of what was most valuable in his experience, were necessarily incommunicable to others, this depending somewhat on his forgetting the process by which, in particular cases, he made up his mind, and its minute successive steps, from his eagerness to possess and put in action the result, and likewise from his being confident in the general soundness of his method, and caring little about formally recording to himself his transient mental conditions, much less announcing them articulately to others;—but mainly, we believe, because no man *can* explain directly to another man *how* he does any



one practical thing, the doing of which he himself has accomplished, not at once, or by imitation, or by teaching, but by repeated personal trials, by missing much, before ultimately hitting.

*John Brown (1810-1882).  
Horæ Subsecivæ (First Series).  
(Locke and Sydenham).*

### *Amiel's Grievance*

Why do doctors so often make mistakes ? Because they are not sufficiently individual in their diagnoses or their treatment. They class a sick man under some given department of their nosology, whereas every invalid is really a special case, a unique example. How is it possible that so coarse a method of sifting should produce judicious therapeutics ?

The principal grievance which I have against the doctors is that they neglect the real problem, which is to seize the unity of the individual who claims their care. Their methods of investigation are far too elementary ; a doctor who does not read you to the bottom is ignorant of essentials. To me the ideal doctor would be a man endowed with profound knowledge of life and of the soul, intuitively divining any suffering or disorder of whatever kind, and restoring peace by his mere presence. Such a doctor is possible, but the greater number of them lack the higher and inner life, they know nothing of the transcendent laboratories of nature ; they seem to me superficial, profane, strangers to divine things, destitute of in-

tuition and sympathy. The model doctor should be at once a genius, a saint, a man of God.

*Henri-Frédéric Amiel* (1828-1881).

*Journal Intime, August 22, 1873.*

*Trans. Mrs. Humphry Ward.*

### *The Great Novelists*

#### *Obiter dicta of Sir Walter*

A doctor is like Ajax—give him light, and he may make battle with a disease; but, no disparagement to the Esculapian art, they are bad guessers.

*Life, Vol. vii, p. 254.*

. . . A slight touch of the cynic in manner and habits, gives the physician, to the common eye, an air of authority which greatly tends to enlarge his reputation.

*Sir Walter Scott* (1771-1832).

*The Surgeon's Daughter, I, 746.*

### *The Patients' Friends*

It is not only for the sick man, it is for the sick man's friends that the Doctor comes. His presence is often as good for them as for the patient, and they long for him yet more eagerly. How we have all watched after him! what an emotion the thrill of his carriage-wheels in the street, and at length at the door, has made us feel! how we hang upon his words and

what a comfort we get from a smile or two, if he can vouchsafe that sunshine to lighten our darkness ! Who hasn't seen the mother prying into his face, to know if there is hope for the sick infant that cannot speak, and that lies yonder, its little frame battling with fever ? Ah, how she looks into his eyes ! What thanks if there is light there ; what grief and pain if he casts them down, and dares not say ' hope ! ' Or it is the house-father who is stricken. The terrified wife looks on, while the Physician feels his patient's wrist, smothering her agonies, as the children have been called upon to stay their plays and their talk. Over the patient in the fever, the wife expectant, the children unconscious, the Doctor stands as if he were Fate, the dispenser of life and death : he *must* let the patient off this time ; the woman prays so for his respite ! One can fancy how awful the responsibility must be to a conscientious man : how cruel the feeling that he has given the wrong remedy, or that it might have been possible to do better : how harassing the sympathy with survivors, if the case is unfortunate—how immense the delight of victory !

*W. M. Thackeray* (1811–1863).

*Pendennis, Ch. LII.*

### *The Doctor's Wife*

I never walk out with my husband, but I hear the people bless him. I never go into a house of any degree, but I hear his praises, or see them in grateful eyes. I never lie down at night, but I know that in the course of that day he has alleviated pain, and soothed some fellow-creature in the time of need.

I know that from the beds of those who were past recovery, thanks have often, often gone up, in the last hour, for his patient ministration. Is not this to be rich? The people even praise Me as the doctor's wife.

*Charles Dickens* (1812-1870).  
*Bleak House*, Ch. LXVII.

### *Taking a Fee*

A physician should take his fee without letting his left hand know what his right hand was doing; it should be taken without a thought, without a look, without a move of the facial muscles; the true physician should hardly be aware that the last friendly grasp of the hand had been made more precious by the touch of gold.

*Anthony Trollope* (1815-1882).  
*Doctor Thorne*, Ch. III.

### *Intellect*

It is seldom a medical man has true religious views—there is too much pride of intellect.

*George Eliot* (1819-1880).  
*Middlemarch*, Ch. XXXI.

### *Sympathy*

This is where the strength of the physician lies, be he a quack, a homœopath or an allopath. He supplies



the perennial demand for comfort, the craving for sympathy that every human sufferer feels. . . .

*Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910).  
War and Peace.*

### *Views of Politicians*

I admire the habits of a physician ; he sees the weakness of our nature ; he is generally just and conscientious, though somewhat selfish, from the contempt which his profession must give him of mankind ; his mind is rather accurate than exalted.

*Lord John Russell (1792-1878).*

Laws are like medicine ; they generally cure an evil by a lesser or a passing evil.

*Bismarck (1815-1898).  
In the Prussian Chamber of Deputies, March 6, 1872.*

For thousands of years medicine has united the aims and aspirations of the best and noblest of mankind. To deprecate its treasures is to discount all human endeavour and achievement as nought.

*Karl Marx (1818-1883).*

Another point upon which I congratulate the profession is its independence. It does not rely on

endowment, but on its own exertions directed to meeting human wants. There is no great profession which has so little to say to the public purse, and which so moderately and modestly dips its hand into that purse. It is not only in the interest of the public, but of the profession itself, that it is eminently self-supporting; and, rely upon it, that the principle of self-support does much to maintain its honour and independence, and to enable it to pursue its stately march in the times that have come and in the times that are coming, to form its own convictions, to act upon its own principles without fear or favour, for the general benefit of mankind.

*William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898).*

*Address at Guy's Hospital (1890).*

Doctors are a social cement.

*Lord Salisbury (1830-1903).*

While I was dealing with the Insurance Act I had much to do with doctors. I found them unreasonable and unruly.

The doctors are always changing their opinions. They always have some new fad.

*David Lloyd George.*

*Quoted in Lord Riddell's War Diary.*

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*Epigrams*

*From Spain*

When a doctor enters a door  
A corpse soon goes out of it.

Get rid of doctors and prescriptions  
For they are flying posts for the other world.

*Julian de Castro.*  
*Mas vale tarde que nunca, Act II.*

The doctor says there is no hope, and as he does  
the killing he ought to know.

*Závala y Zamora.*  
*El triunfo del Amor y Amistad, Act II, Sc. 8.*

*From France*

Medical knowledge is taken too directly from  
sources of life not to render him who possesses it more  
human.

How many errors have been committed because  
the physician has not been able to discern, under the  
masque of the invalid, a man.

*E. Rist.*

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Doctors prefer to treat bodies rather than minds.

*Léon Pierre-Quint.  
Life of André Gide.*

*From America*

The lawyers are the cleverest men, the ministers are the most learned, and the doctors are the most sensible.

*Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894).*

*By a Jew*

A physician who professes to cure for nothing is often worth nothing.

*Hershon.  
Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary, p. 335 (1883).*

*From England*

Life is a railway, the years are the stations, death the terminus, and doctors—the stokers.

*Anon.  
Quoted by J. Raymond Solly.  
The Cynic's Breviary.*

Doctors are the only autocrats we have left.

*E. F. Benson.  
The Luck of the Vails.*

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Physicians and politicians resemble one another in this respect, that some defend the constitution and others destroy it.

*Anon.*

*From Acton or the Circle of Life.*  
(19th Cent.).

### *Typical Victorians*

Among the arts, medicine, on account of its eminent utility, must always hold the highest place.

The diminution of pain is, looking at things in a large point of view, the least of the benefits derived from the soothing hand of the accomplished physician. His influence on the progress of civilization consists in being enabled to lengthen life.

*Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862).*  
*Miscellaneous and posthumous works.*  
*Vol. II, (Medicine). Ed. Grant Allen.*

So of doctors. They like fees no doubt—ought to like them ; yet if they are brave and well-educated, the entire object of their lives is not fees. They, on the whole, desire to cure the sick ; and—if they are good doctors, and the choice were fairly put to them—would rather cure their patient, and lose their fee, than kill him, and get it.

*John Ruskin (1819-1900).*  
*The Crown of Wild Olive, 32.*

Of the generosity of physicians one *need* say nothing, for there are few who have not experienced or witnessed it ; and one *had better* say nothing, as no words could do justice to such a subject. This writer can speak for at least one poor scholar, to whose sick bed physicians have come from distant quarters of the town, day after day, never taking a coin for their precious services, and always in their graceful benevolence seeming to find positive enjoyment in their unpaid labour.

*J. C. Jeaffreson* (1831-1901).  
*A Book about Doctors.*

A physician's physiology has much the same relation to his power of healing as a cleric's divinity has to his power of influencing conduct.

*Samuel Butler* (1835-1902).  
*Note Books.*

Just as the journalist conceives of men and women as readers of newspapers, and the banker conceives of them as possessors of cheque-books, so the doctor conceives of them as 'suffering humanity.' Some doctors are not even content with this. They suppose most people to be suffering from the particular disease in which they happen to be specialists. My friend Sir T. D., the eminent specialist in rheumatism, told me the other day that 'rheumatoid arthritis' was 'the scourge of the human race.' It is probable that not one in a thousand suffers from that rare disease, and if there were no specialists in appendicitis it is probable that that affliction would be as rare as it was before its

discovery. It is a solemn fact that the discovery of a new disease immediately creates a demand for it.

J. A. Spender.

*The Comments of Bagshot.*

### *A Noble Tribute*

There are men and classes of men that stand above the common herd : the soldier, the sailor, and the shepherd not unfrequently ; the artist rarely ; rarelier still, the clergyman ; the physician almost as a rule. He is the flower (such as it is) of our civilization ; and when that stage of man is done with, and only remembered to be marvelled at in history, he will be thought to have shared as little as any in the defects of the period, and most notably exhibited the virtues of the race. Generosity he has, such as is possible to those who practise an art, never to those who drive a trade ; discretion, tested by a hundred secrets ; tact, tried in a thousand embarrassments ; and what are more important, Heracleian cheerfulness and courage. So it is that he brings air and cheer into the sick-room, and often enough, though not as often as he wishes, brings healing.

R. L. Stevenson (1850-1894).

*Dedication of Underwoods.*

### *A Great Physician on his Profession*

There are only two sorts of doctors : those who practise with their brains, and those who practise with their tongues.

By his commission the physician is sent to the sick, and knowing in his calling neither Jew nor Gentile, bond or free, perhaps he alone rises superior to those differences which separate and make us dwell apart, too often oblivious to the common hopes and frailties which should bind us together as a race. In his professional relations, though divided by national lines, there remains the feeling that he belongs to a guild which owes no local allegiance, which has neither king nor country, but whose work is in the world.

*William Osler (1849-1919).  
Counsels and Ideals, Ch. 15 and 6.*

### *Looking Back*

And truly, like the old mediciner in the tale, 'he sat diligently at his work, and hummed, with cheerful countenance, a pious song'; and then in turn 'went out singing into the meadows so gaily, that those who had seen him from afar might well have thought it was a youth gathering flowers for his beloved, instead of an old physician gathering healing herbs in the morning dew.'

*J. H. Newman (1801-1890).  
The Idea of a University, V, 8.*

Wonderful little, when all is said,  
Wonderful little our fathers knew.  
Half their remedies cured you dead—  
Most of their teaching was quite untrue—



Look at the stars when a patient is ill,  
 (Dirt has nothing to do with disease),  
 Bleed and blister as much as you will,  
 Blister and bleed him as oft as you please :  
     Whence enormous and manifold  
     Errors were made by our fathers of old.

Yet when the sickness was sore in the land,  
 And neither planet nor herb assuaged,  
 They took their lives in their lancet-hand  
 And, oh, what a wonderful war they waged !  
 Yes, when the crosses were chalked on the door—  
 Yes, when the terrible dead-cart rolled,  
 Excellent courage our fathers bore—  
 Excellent heart had our fathers of old.  
 None too learned, but nobly bold  
 Into the fight went our fathers of old.

*Rudyard Kipling.*  
*Rewards and Fairies.*

*Verses, Laudatory and Otherwise*

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,  
 Some doctor full of phrase and fame,  
 To shake his sapient head, and give  
 The ill he cannot cure a name.

*Matthew Arnold (1822-1888).*  
*A Wish.*

Doctor once dubbed—what ignorance shall baulk  
 Thy march triumphant? Diagnose the gout  
 As colic, and prescribe it cheese for chalk—

No matter ! All's one : cure shall come about  
And win thee wealth—fees paid with such a roar  
Of thanks and praise alike from lord and lout

As never stunned man's ears on earth before.  
' How may this be ? ' Why, that's my sceptic ! Soon  
Truth will corrupt thee, soon thou doubt'st no more.

*Robert Browning* (1812-1889).

*Doctor —.*

*Dramatic Idyls.*

*Great and Good Physician*

What restless forms to-day are lying, bound  
On sick-beds, waiting till the hour come round  
That brings thy foot upon the chamber stair,  
Impatient, fevered, faint, till thou art there,  
Then one short smile of sunshine to make light  
The long remembrance of another night.

*Harriet E. Hamilton King.*

*Ballads of the North.*

*The Kind Physician*

The kind physician, on his round, fulfils  
His busy day in wrestling with our ills ;  
Allays a fever, stills some racking pain ;  
And spares not hand, nor heart, nor eager brain ;  
Braces the fearful, soothes the anxious breast,  
And at the urgent call renounces rest.  
Contagion daunts him not, immune he walks  
Where germs are rife, their virulence he balks ;

Spending himself, his work is never done  
When epidemics, like quicksilver, run. . . .  
O can we praise or value overmuch  
His skill, his cheering presence, healing touch ?  
Nay ! Since from birth until the hour of death  
He fails us not. O, let us with the breath  
Of prayer and blessing follow where he goes,  
The KIND PHYSICIAN each, in illness, knows !

*Brenda Murray Draper.*

*Poems against Doctors*

1.

The doctors are a frightful race.  
I can't see how they have the face  
to go on practising their base  
profession ; but in any case  
I mean to put them in their place.

2.

*Their Avarice*

The doctor lives by chicken pox,  
by measles, and by mumps.  
He keeps a microbe in a box  
and cheers him when he jumps  
  
at unsuspecting children, who  
have two important nurses ;  
but if it bounds where less than two  
are kept, he simply curses.

His greed is such that though you ache  
 in every limb, be sure  
 if there is nothing else to take,  
 he'll take your temperature.

And if at first he can't succeed,  
 he has another try,  
 and takes your pulse. Some people plead  
 'The man must live!' But why?

### *Their Ignorance*

And then besides. It makes me boil  
 the way he snarls 'Cod Liver Oil'  
 in a loud tone, or even louder  
 'I think we'll try a soothing powder.'  
 Powder be blowed! Do you suppose  
 that any Doctor really knows  
 where powders go when they are taken,  
 why medicine bottles should be shaken—  
 or what's the matter with your lung  
 by making faces at your tongue!  
 Of course he can't. The truth is that  
 he doesn't know what he is at,  
 but must say something or another  
 to satisfy your anxious mother,  
 who never is content until  
 his medicines make you really ill. . . .

*Humbert Wolfe.  
 Cursory Rhymes.*

*Two of a Trade*

Only a most obscure disease  
Could baffle Doctors Chalk and Cheese ;  
Both are superlative G.P.'s,

Though neither of them jealous ;  
Relations of the friendliest sort  
(If one can credit such report)  
Exist between these men—in short  
They are the best of fellows.

They differ only in the way  
They treat their patients. *Chalk*, they say,  
Plies his with  $\propto$  and violet ray,  
Pills and inoculation ;  
While *Cheese* adopts the other tack,  
Pats his (and Nature) on the back,  
Content to see they do not lack  
Fresh air and conversation.

The twain are justly popular  
With those who suffer from catarrh—  
And, goodness, what a lot these are,  
Both children and adults !—  
But, though I rack my aching brain,  
I am unable to explain  
How *both* these clever men obtain  
Identical results.

*Woon.*

*Punch*—February 14, 1934.

*A High Calling*

Every sane human being is agreed that this long-drawn fight for time, which we call Life, is one of the most important things in the world. It follows therefore that you, who control and oversee this fight, and you who will reinforce it, must be amongst the most important people in the world. Certainly the world will treat you on that basis. It has long ago decided that you have no working hours that anybody is bound to respect, and nothing but extreme bodily illness will excuse you in its eyes from refusing to help a man who thinks he may need your help at any hour of the day or night. Nobody will care whether you are in your bed or in your bath, on your holiday or at the theatre. If any one of the children of men has a pain or a hurt on him you will be summoned. And, as you know, what little vitality you may have accumulated in your leisure will be dragged out of you again.

In all times of flood, fire, famine, plague, pestilence, battle, murder, and sudden death, it will be required of you that you report for duty at once, go on duty at once, and remain on duty until your strength fails or your conscience relieves you, whichever may be the longer period.

It seems to be required of you that you must save others. It is nowhere laid down that you need save yourselves. That is to say you belong to the privileged classes. May I remind you of some of your privileges? You and kings are about the only people whose explanation the police will accept if you exceed the legal limit in your car. On presentation

of your visiting card you can pass through the most turbulent crowd unmolested ; even with applause. If you fly a yellow flag over a centre of population you can turn it into a desert. If you choose to fly a Red Cross flag over a desert you can turn it into a centre of population towards which, as I have seen, men will crawl on hands and knees. You can forbid any ship to enter any port in the world. If you think it necessary to the success of any operation in which you are interested, you can stop a 20,000 ton liner with her mails in mid-ocean till that operation is completed. You can tie up the traffic of any port without notice given. You can order houses, streets, whole quarters of a city to be pulled down or burnt up, and you can count on the co-operation of the nearest armed troops, to see your prescription properly carried out.

You remain now perhaps the only class that dares to tell the world that we can get nothing more out of a machine than we put into it ; that if the fathers have eaten forbidden fruit the children's teeth are liable to be affected. Your training shows you daily and directly that things are what they are, and that their consequences will be what they will be and that we deceive no one but ourselves when we pretend otherwise.

Have you ever considered what a tremendous privilege that is ? At a time when few things are called by their right names, when it is against the spirit of the times even to hint that an act may entail consequences—you are going to join a profession in which you will be paid for telling men the truth, and

every departure you may make from the truth you will make as a concession to man's bodily weakness, and not his mental weakness.

*Rudyard Kipling.*

*Address to Students at the Middlesex Hospital, 1908.*

The doctor's is the most human of professions. It treats human beings morally as well as physically, and one might even say that it is a spiritual agency too. It receives as much in confidences as it gives out in advice. The only work which is comparable with a doctor's in this world is a parson's. But the parson has fewer opportunities than the doctor.

The country doctor facing any weather at any time of the night and travelling any distances in difficult country may be a benign and brave figure of heroic dignity.

*From a review of Confessio Medici  
in The Spectator, 1908.*

### *Fair Criticism*

A physician needed so much more than knowledge of disease. His authority must extend and derive from beyond the surgery. That was where so many failed. They were negligible as men. Their interests were narrow, their minds prone to jealousy and suspicion, their noses kept too close to the grindstone of general or special practice to give them the chance of wider vision, even when they might be capable of taking it. The temptation to interpret life in terms



of a single aspect was as inviting to them as the temptation to attack disease from the angle of their speciality or their own pet theory ; while those who did not ride hobby-horses were often sceptics who did not believe in the efficacy of the drugs they prescribed. What was there about special training that robbed all but the strongest minds of their balance ? It must be, he supposed, that those who took it were forced to specialise so young that they never got any real education at all.

*L. A. G. Strong.*  
*Corporal Tune.*

### *Contemporary Opinions*

The most tragic thing in the world is a sick doctor.

Did you ever see a boy cultivating a moustache ? Well, a middle-aged doctor cultivating a grey head is much the same sort of spectacle.

*George Bernard Shaw.*  
*The Doctor's Dilemma, Act I.*

I should feel myself ungrateful if I did not testify to my enormous respect and gratitude to the medical profession, and really, on the whole, the doctors I have known have been, I think, among the finest men of my acquaintance. I may have been very fortunate, but that has been my experience. And I am thinking not only of their great skill—though I think I should

think even more of them if they had discovered how to prevent and how to cure a common cold—but also I have found them always the kindest and wisest friends. And I cannot speak too highly of their wonderful generosity in money matters, a generosity far surpassing what I have found in any other profession.

*Dean Inge.*

*Address to Students of The London Hospital, 1933.*

No one appreciates the medical profession more highly than myself. Doctors are the most generous of men; but they are unwise when they represent doctoring either as an art or a science. The late Dr. Jowett once said that logic 'was neither a science nor an art, but a dodge,' and doctors would be better appreciated if they would frankly admit that doctoring is like logic.

*Anonymous Author of More from a  
Lawyer's Notebook, 1933.*

That combination of *savoir-faire* with a sort of well-groomed coarseness which is not uncommon in young doctors.

*G. K. Chesterton.*

*The Man who was Thursday.*

Of course everybody knows that Doctors never say anything unkind about each other, it is part of their Unwritten Law and a sore trial to nearly all of them.

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The only person to whom a Doctor can say exactly what he thinks about another Doctor is his Wife. That is why practically all Doctors are married.

Everybody knows that surgeons are temperamental and that allowance must be made for the Surgeon's Temperament.

*Joyce Dennys.*  
*The Over-Dose.*

*Envoi*

If a doctor's life may not be a divine vocation, then no life is a vocation, and nothing is divine.

*Stephen Paget.*  
*Confessio Medici.*

## RETROSPECT

Looking back, it is evident that the American writer, Charles L. Dana, was right when he said that 'all the real, solid, elemental jests against doctors were uttered some one or two thousand years ago'; for medical satire and dispraise throughout the ages seem always to have been much of the same kind. Doctors are accused of ignorance, of greed for gain, of not practising what they preach and especially of killing more than they cure; on the other hand, they are praised for their learning, kindness and generosity.

It would appear that praise and dispraise pretty well cancel out, just as in any doctor's practice undeserved blame is balanced by unearned credit. There can be no doubt, however, that right down to the last century censure of medical skill was often well justified, but with the rise of scientific medicine such strictures became less called for and less frequent. Even now, however, there is plenty of scope for the critic for, from the nature of his work, the doctor must often play a losing game and can easily be accused of failure. It would probably be true, however, to say that the individual doctor is better liked than the profession as a whole, and contemporary criticism is being directed more against the so-called 'professional etiquette' and 'trade-unionism' of medical men than against their supposed failings either personal or scientific.

It is possible, of course, that no profession is really popular with those outside its closed circle, and that the possession of exclusive rights and privileges, and even more the attainment of knowledge which still

seems to the layman rather mysterious, entails of necessity some animosity.

This reflection must console any doctor who may feel hurt by some of the passages quoted in our anthology and he should be comforted by the many laudatory extracts, although modesty may not always allow him to apply them to himself.

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